

THE CHALLENGE OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES IN THE CHURCH:
A CASE STUDY IN THE APPOINTMENT OF WOMEN TO
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF GOD OF PROPHECY

A THESIS-PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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JANUARY 2019

I dedicate this project to my husband, John. He is a quiet and yet fortifying faith that builds value and confidence in my spirit and my passion to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He is and has been a clear and loving example of God's purposeful investment in my life.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This course of study would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of my family. My husband John is a constant source of inspiration and consistently encourages me to pursue my passion to know more. He has allowed the opportunity for my studies and continues to keep our lives and ministries moving forward in obedience to the call of our Lord. Our son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren have also found room among our very full ministry service that I might explore the call to scholarship. They share us with the global ministry in which we serve and have assumed their roles in this comprehensive and global family of blessing and love.

I also acknowledge the encouragement and blessing of parents who returned to post graduate work late in life and hungered to seek deeper truths to bring understanding and instruction to younger students. Dad taught in a university in his last years of life and Mom continues to open the Word weekly with anointing in Sunday School ministry.

I am also thankful for the staff who serve with us in Global Missions Ministries. Shelly Wilbanks and Stephanie Flynn are anointed women of God who use their passion and gifting to minister incredibly among a rising generation of emerging leaders. I am grateful to serve among mighty women and men of God at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy who desire nothing more than to serve our Lord with excellence, clean hands and pure hearts. Special thanks go to Darren Schalk, Mike Luithle, and Renee Rodriguez for their assistance in formatting a portion of this work.

Finally, I am grateful for and indebted to my professors and my mentor in this doctoral program. I am deeply appreciative to Dr. Eldin Villafañe and Dr. Hector Ortiz, both of whom encouraged my efforts and believed I could finish with excellence.

ABSTRACT

A few years ago, churches among the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements celebrated more than a century of revival as a result of the outpouring of the Pentecostal experience in recent history. One of the successes celebrated was a doctrine that rose among the early Pentecostals referred to as “A love that could erase boundaries.” Many witnesses testified of the work of the Holy Spirit that erased racial, ethnic, gender, and other bias for vessels who were called into global ministry and leadership. Hope rose that the resulting Holy Spirit experience would end prejudice and bias, and that all anointing, ministry, and leadership would be honored among those movements.

As a woman who has ministered and led ministries for many years within the Pentecostal movement, predominately the Church of God of Prophecy, my witness would be one that would counter that supposition. While the outpouring of the Pentecostal experience escalated the current revival of the Holy Spirit globally, there were, and continue to be, lingering limitations within the context of globalization.

This thesis offers a perspective concerning the true, dynamic work of Pentecostalism that influenced a new measure for recognizing calling and anointing in rising leadership with respect to global ministry. It will address some of the restrictive issues women face today when attempting to move in obedience to the work of the Holy Spirit as they have been called to lead in executive ministerial roles. It will explore some of the historical, biblical, and theological reasons that have been used to discourage women to move in their gifting and in obedience to the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to executive ministerial leadership, with a specific perspective inclusive to the Church of God of Prophecy.

CHAPTER ONE THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

*And we know that in all things
God works for the good of those who love him,
who have been called according to his purpose.*
Romans 8:28, NIV

Introduction

We were sitting in the back of the room. As the three female ministry leaders under the General Overseer's supervision, we had been invited to the pre-assembly International Presbytery (IP) meeting as *observers only* – we could not speak nor vote. Only ordained bishops under international appointment were historically included as participants in the IP meeting. We were there to witness the proceedings concerning the third change in global leadership in nearly 100 years of operation. It was a pivotal moment in our history. It was our 91st International Assembly in July 2000.

The meeting had been filled with such tension and disagreement after two days of deliberations, necessity dictated that we begin the entire process anew. Before moving into the new process, the retiring General Overseer, Bishop Billy Murray, called the body of approximately 130 male presiding state/regional/national overseers and international bishops and three female ministry leaders to somber prayer.

As we began to seek the Lord's direction and experience His presence, many of the leaders were overwhelmed by the workings of the Holy Spirit. Some began to sing, some began to weep, and others began to extend their hands and hearts across the aisles to those with whom they had just previously been in strong opposition.

Seated at the back of the room, we were provided a unique vantage point. Looking up, I noticed one of our seven General Presbyters who serve beside our General Overseer descending from the front platform moving toward our table. He took our hands and compassionately asked for forgiveness for the limitation placed on us in this meeting. He told us that he recognized each of us as global leaders and saw each of us with both hands full of global Gospel ministry and yet our voices had been silenced in this leadership meeting. He asked for patience and promised a change in future IP meetings.

Fourteen years and seven International Assemblies later, we sat in the same pre-assembly IP meeting with approximately 130 male presiding state/regional/national overseers and international bishops and three female ministry leaders. We were again transitioning leadership of the General Overseer and the same tension and unsettledness weighted the atmosphere.

During the first session of the meeting prior to the business portion of leadership transition, our Biblical, Doctrine, and Polity committee issued their report into the proceedings. The last item of their report contained a scripturally based, and General Presbyters supported, recommendation that women serving in ministerial leadership at the International Offices who were previously invited to be a part of the proceedings be given a voice and voting privileges.

The recommendation had not been previously released so I was unaware of and unprepared for the ensuing discussion concerning the limitations of a woman's place in international ministerial and executive leadership. I sat quietly with my face down as several bishops in executive leadership with whom I work regularly denounced the

recommendation with critical commentary. Much to the surprise of those voices of dissent, the recommendation passed with a large margin of approval.

In twenty-one years of international ministerial and positional leadership and ten pre-assembly IP meetings, my voice was now a somewhat-welcomed, nevertheless, official inclusion in the decision-making process of leadership transition. I will speak to this again in the conclusion of this chapter.

A Historic Overview

The Church of God of Prophecy is a Pentecostal movement that can trace its beginnings to over one hundred years ago among believers in the rural mountains of Cherokee County, North Carolina. Following a miraculous revival at a local schoolhouse, a small congregation agreed to pray and study the scriptures together.

From that beginning in our early history as a Christian movement, women stood beside men in predominate positions of ministry and leadership.

In the first general assembling of leadership in 1906 to consider questions of importance and to search the Bible for additional light and knowledge, women were included among the 21 delegates in attendance.¹ The extent of female involvement became an issue at the Second General Assembly in 1907. Church leaders referred to the New Testament and pointed out “the important positions occupied by women in the time of Christ and His apostles.”² By the fourth General Assembly in 1909, it was decided that “female ministers had their place in the Lord's vineyard in the days of the apostles and

¹ C.T. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 1 (Cleveland, TN; White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1973), 324.

² J. S. Llewellyn, ed., *Book of Minutes* (Cleveland, TN; Church of God Publishing House, 1922), 20.

must be recognized in these days.”³ From that assembly forward, women engaged in ministry/leadership were recognized and supplied with licensure along with men serving in those roles.⁴ David Roebuck confirms it was not unusual to see women preaching, pastoring, and leading ministries in Pentecostalism’s early years.⁵

The Church of God of Prophecy intersected with the Azusa Street Revival in early 1908 when our founder and movement leader, Ambrose Jessup Tomlinson, was baptized in the Holy Spirit in a Sunday morning service in which G. B. Cashwell preached a sermon and gave an invitation for Spirit baptism.⁶ Harold Hunter suggests that Tomlinson had already begun to preach on the Azusa Revival version of Spirit baptism within the new movement, but after the Cleveland meeting he was influenced by the experience of the outpouring himself.⁷ In line with other emerging Holiness and Pentecostal movements of the time, Tomlinson’s writings began to refer to men and women concerning ministry.⁸ Ministerial credentials issued and signed by Tomlinson, as early as 1909 and as late as 1914, authorized men and women to “publish, preach and defend the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to baptize, to administer the Lord’s Supper and the washing of the Saints[’] feet.”⁹ In *The Last Great Conflict*, Tomlinson wrote, “It is our purpose to

³ Llewellyn, *Book of Minutes*, 33.

⁴ Buford M. Johnson, *Eighty-Two General Assemblies of the Church of God of Prophecy: Historical Highlights, 1906-1987* (Cleveland, TN: White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1988), 12.

⁵ David G. Roebuck, “Loose the Women,” *Christian History* 58, (1998): accessed December 10, 2017, <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/issue/the-rise-of-pentecostalism>.

⁶ Kimberly Ervin Alexander and James P. Bowers, *What Women Want: Pentecostal Women Ministers Speak For Themselves* (Lanham: The Seymour Press, 2013), 21.

⁷ Harold Hunter, “A Portrait of How the Azusa Doctrine of Spirit Baptism Shaped American Pentecostalism,” (2018), accessed January 5, 2018, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200602/200602_078_AzusaDoctrine.cfm.

⁸ Alexander and Bowers, *What Women Want*, 22.

⁹ Alexander and Bowers, *What Women Want*, 22.

encourage both men and women, young and old; to undertake great things for God and expect great thing[s] from God.”¹⁰

When I consider the context of the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and witness the impact on those who were there to experience it as recorded in the book of Acts, I can begin to appreciate the impact on Tomlinson as he began to first experience the fulness of the Holy Spirit. According to Jewish custom, the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated only by men. However, Jesus had instructed His believers to go and tarry for the promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). The narrative in the book of Acts notes that on that day of Pentecost, both male believers and female believers were tarrying in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14). As such, both men and women experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that day.

Jesus identified this outpouring as power for service (Acts 1:8). As indeed men and women were both empowered, women would now also be targeted by the Holy Spirit, called upon, and empowered for service. Peter’s preaching from the prophet Joel confirmed that sons and daughters would prophesy and this has been one of the key encouragements for women to enter Christian leadership and ministry (Acts 2:17).

Allan Anderson affirms that early twentieth century Pentecostals believed strongly in the call of God and anointing with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit.¹¹ This outpouring provided liberty for women to move in obedience to the call of God and provided a foundation for preaching ministries and home prayer meeting leadership roles

¹⁰ Ambrose J. Tomlinson, *The Last Great Conflict* (Cleveland, TN; Press of Walter E. Rodgers, 1913), vii.

¹¹ Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2005), 103.

as never before according to historical global accounts. In the flow of revival, Pentecostal and Charismatic groups did indeed provide a larger space for women.¹²

The urgency of early Pentecostalism in light of eschatological convictions concerning the soon return of Christ meant that every voice should be raised, directing fallen men and women toward their need of repentance and conversion. Women were included in this critical role within the movement. Pentecostals allowed women to prophesy because the Spirit-filled vessel was the voice of God.¹³ However, tension rose concerning ordination and licensure for women in more official positions of authority.

As the fires of evangelism blazed, women were encouraged to become exhorters, testifying in public of their experience with the Holy Spirit and encouraging others to submit to His work in their lives. However, these same women were increasingly prohibited access to the higher leadership and ministry roles dominated by male Pentecostal leadership.¹⁴

And, so it was in the Church of God of Prophecy. In 1912, women evangelists were given “the authority to set churches in order and [join] them together by the right hand of fellowship.”¹⁵ One year later, in 1913, the Eighth General Assembly determined that only male bishops be granted the privilege of performing marriages and began the limitation of women in leadership and ministry from that point forward.¹⁶ By 1915, Tomlinson suggested, “Let the good sisters feel at perfect liberty to preach the gospel,

¹² Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: an introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 149.

¹³ Kalu, *African Pentecostalism*, 1204.

¹⁴ Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Massa, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, 2003), 1203.

¹⁵ Llewellyn, ed., *Book of Minutes*, 63.

¹⁶ Llewellyn, ed., *Book of Minutes*, 63.

pray for the sick or well, testify, exhort, etc., but humbly hold themselves aloof from taking charge of the governmental affairs.¹⁷ In 1917, General Overseer A. J. Tomlinson made provision for women to “assist the pastor . . . [and] be classified according to the needs and best interest of the church.”¹⁸

Raymond Pruitt, a leading scholar with a life-time of ministry in the Church of God of Prophecy, submitted a paper to our doctrine committee during the 1980’s concerning the diminishing role of women in executive leadership roles. He concluded that due to their inaccessibility to, or restriction from ordination, women gradually lost authority in the church and were precluded from most high offices and places of responsibility. The Church of God of Prophecy which began with fewer restrictions and seeming greater liberty for women to excel in roles of executive ministerial leadership than many early Pentecostal denominational movements, had moved into more restrictive polity.

The Vital Role of Women in Early Pentecostalism

Generally, scholars agree that women produced a vital role and contributed to the history of Pentecostalism. They also agree that the great achievements of women in ministry leadership roles have been more acknowledged and accepted outside of denominational structures. During a lecture on the History of Global Pentecostalism, Dr. Hector Ortiz suggested four possible underlying rationale for this dilemma:

The routinization/bureaucracy systems that move toward power control by male gender, poor hermeneutics due to lack of proper Biblical/theological education gendered by the anti-educational bias of the origin of Pentecostalism, an attitude

¹⁷ Alexander and Bowers, *What Women Want*, 25. Cited: A. J. Tomlinson, “Paul’s Statements Considered,” *Church of God Evangel* (18 September 1915): 4.

¹⁸ Llewellyn, ed., *Book of Minutes*, 289-290.

of general bias toward women for whatever underlying causes whether socio-political or anthropological or all of the above, or any other deep-rooted hindrance to block women in ministry or leadership.¹⁹

I agree with Dr. Ortiz's conclusions with specific polity change within the Church of God of Prophecy as they moved toward growing a denomination. It seems that as the fellowship moved more toward institutionalization, their focus shifted, especially concerning their appointments of women in executive level roles of leadership.

Eldin Villafañe confirms that women have indeed held significant roles in the beginnings and the development of Pentecostalism, suggesting that the movement of Pentecostalism could not have survived without the leadership women offered.²⁰

Recognition has often been attributed to the role of women in the expansion of ancient Christianity. Even during the early centuries, the church had more support from women than men.²¹ Generally, Christian teachings called for respect for women that were anti-cultural in view of the practices of society at large. The network of communication among women in their daily chores was one of the main channels through which the word of the gospel spread.²²

Steven Land suggests the narrative journey of Pentecostals characterized as a crisis-development dialectic.²³ For Pentecostals, crisis points were times when God did something decisive which made possible a development that, before that time, was not

¹⁹ Hector Ortiz, "Lecture Notes on History of Global Pentecostalism" Gordon-Conwell Doctor of Ministry Program, Dominican Republic, 19-23 January 2015, 340-341.

²⁰ Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward An Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 131.

²¹ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi and Justo L. González, *To All Nations from All Nations: A History of the Christian Missionary Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 46.

²² Cardoza-Orlandi and González, *To All Nations from All Nations*, 46.

²³ Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 112.

possible. Among the early Pentecostal movement, even women could have a vital role in ministry as elders, pastors, missionaries, teachers, etc. Pentecostals lived in a world of the expectation of the miraculous and divine visitation. God's activity became the basis for the expectation of the working of Holy Spirit.²⁴

In His ministry, Jesus took time with the disciples to help them understand the work of the Holy Spirit. As those who were commissioned to reach the world with the gospel, they needed to know that the Holy Spirit would be with them and anoint their preaching with His power.²⁵ The supernatural and miracle-working ministries of Christ and the apostles were undeniable signs that authenticated the message of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. This fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit would now be available in this day and active among the Church. And women had received the gift of the empowering Holy Spirit – the only qualification for being sent.²⁶

After observing the change in individuals once they had experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit, others became convinced that they too could experience the same personal empowering.²⁷ There was and is a sense in Pentecostalism of the divine destiny – participation with God in a new work for the last days. Though women were encouraged to participate in the divine destiny and to fill prominent roles of ministry, they became more and more restricted from pastoral and leadership roles,

“Despite the prominent role of women as preachers and missionaries in the original work of the Pentecostal movement, only a minority of Pentecostal churches permit women to be pastors or to preach the Word to men, though

²⁴ Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality*, 113.

²⁵ John MacArthur, *Strange Fire: The Danger of Offending the Holy Spirit with Counterfeit Worship* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2013), 185.

²⁶ Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 112, 113.

²⁷ Calvin Smith, *Pentecostal Power: Expressions Impact, and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism* (Leiden: Brill NV, 2011), 13.

women are everywhere encouraged to exercise the Gifts of the Spirit, particularly healing, prophecy, powerful prayer and baptism in the Spirit.”²⁸

Hollenweger warns that the sole purpose of any church order is to make room for the Spirit to fulfill His work in edifying the Church with as little hindrance as possible.²⁹

Villafañe speaks of the love of Christ that transcends “every barrier, every nation, every race, every culture, and every people.”³⁰ He encourages us all as instruments of God to have “a strong sense of God’s calling, a sure word from God, and courage to fulfill the ministry for which we have been called.”³¹

Kärkkäinen suggests that theology can no longer be the privilege of one people group. “Instead, it must be context specific as it addresses God’s world in specific situations and in response to varying needs and challenges.”³² He further encourages us that by listening to the voices from places we once considered marginal in Christian theology, such as the voices of women, sensitizes us to the necessary pluralism of pneumatologies.³³ The one Spirit of God opens Himself into a multitude of experiences.

A Brief History of Female Executive Leadership in the Church of God of Prophecy

As our movement grew, the need for organized leadership also grew and one of the identification marks distinguishing the Church of God of Prophecy has been the early recognition and use of women in executive ministerial leadership roles. A brief history of

²⁸ Smith, *Pentecostal Power*, 94.

²⁹ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1988), 429.

³⁰ Eldin Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace: A Call to Radical Discipleship, Incarnation, and Justice* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 35.

³¹ Villafañe, *Beyond Cheap Grace*, 81.

³² Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology: The Holy Spirit in Ecumenical International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 147.

³³ Kärkkäinen, *Pneumatology*, 147.

early mission appointments to the nations for the Church of God of Prophecy include women being sent in administrative roles.

As early as 1910, the Church of God of Prophecy recognized Lillian Thrasher from Dahlonega, Georgia as she traveled to Egypt in response to God's call to establish and administrate an orphanage in Assiut, Egypt. Further, financial support was received during General Assemblies and sent annually to help support her and administrate the work until she submitted herself for inclusion into a different denominational mission agency.³⁴ When she died, she was honored by the Egyptian government for taking care of 1400 children and widows. In fifty years of ministerial leadership, she ministered to more than 20,000 children and widows. Her work is still in operation and I visited there on my last journey to Assiut some years ago.

In 1914, Jenny Rushin and her husband, P. R. Rushin, were sent from Valdosta, Georgia to establish and administrate mission work in China.³⁵ By 1916, Jenny was noted to be working in Philippines, as a prayer request at the General Assembly included the news that she was sick in body and sacrificing for the work.³⁶

By 1935, A. J. Tomlinson appointed Eliza V. Martin as the first female national administrative leader to serve in Barbados.³⁷ She served in this position from 1935-1941. During the same General Assembly year, Bishop Tomlinson appointed Mary H. Ryan as the national administrative leader in Montserrat.³⁸ She served in this position under A. J. Tomlinson until his death in 1943 and was appointed again in 1944 under the newly

³⁴ Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 1, 437, 445.

³⁵ Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 1, 445.

³⁶ Llewellyn, ed., *Book of Minutes*, 245.

³⁷ C. T. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 2 (Cleveland, TN; White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1974), 895.

³⁸ Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 2, 896.

accepted General Overseer, Milton A. Tomlinson, the son of A. J. Tomlinson.³⁹ She served in this role until 1947.

In 1952, General Overseer Milton Tomlinson appointed Rebecca Sisco as the national administrative leader to New Zealand.⁴⁰ She served in this role from 1952-1955.

Bishop Adrian Varlack, our World Mission Secretary from 1974-1994, suggested that in actual practice these women (who would have carried a restricted license as a female Evangelist) would have performed the necessary administrative duties required of overseeing an area such as reporting, keeping the General Overseer informed on the progress of the work, and the practical side of church work. They would have been assisted by male ministers in designated functions (such as moderating business meetings and setting forth ministers) by other itinerant ministers traveling to the area or by special permission under the authority of the General Overseer.

It is noteworthy that A. J. Tomlinson, who personally traveled to Barbados in January of 1926 after organizing the church on New Year's Day in St. Thomas USVI, said, that the church he had organized in Barbados on January 24, 1924 with 130 members, "was the biggest landslide in one service for the Church I believe I ever witnessed."⁴¹

The pattern suggested by the appointments above is that perhaps during the Charismatic beginnings of ministry, women are welcome to administrative and executive leadership positions, sometimes because they are the only ones willing to accept the

³⁹ C. T. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 3 (Cleveland, TN; White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1976), 783.

⁴⁰ Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 3, 788.

⁴¹ A. J. Tomlinson, *Diary of A. J. Tomlinson 1925-1943* (Cleveland: White Wing Publishing House and Press, 2013), 31.

challenge. However, as the ministry expands and established respectability is anticipated, female leaders are replaced by male leaders who may have completed educational degrees and come with credentials. More than once we have seen this pattern cycled as a woman was appointed to a leadership position to initiate a ministry. When the ministry prospered and expanded, the woman was often reassigned to initiate a new ministry and the growing, established church was assigned to a male emerging leader.⁴²

The exception to this pattern, at least for the Church of God of Prophecy, can be found in the women who were appointed to executive leadership at the International Offices. The constant to those appointments seems to be that those roles of leadership are acceptable positions of leadership for women.

The primary appointment of a woman to executive leadership at the International Offices, known as Bible Place in those years, came in 1929. However, the ministry of the woman appointed began to be recognized in 1923. The very first issue of the *White Wing Messenger* dated September 15, 1923, included an article entitled, “Power Falling In Virginia.” The copy reports on the ministry of a young woman named Clara Mabe. The anointing of the Holy Spirit on Sister Mabe was clear as the results of the three-week-long meeting she led was published in the denomination’s first publication under the *White Wing Messenger* brand.

It was five years later in the 23rd General Assembly that the Questions and Subjects Committee recommended that a more organized effort in behalf of missions be carried out by “each church organizing a Church of God Women’s Missionary Band.”⁴³

⁴² Stanley L. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 52.

⁴³ Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 2, 313-314.

This ministry would organize women's bands to raise missionary funds, provide clothing, etc., and assist the pastor in raising a missionary offering on the second Sunday of each month. The recommendation was reported in the December 1, 1928 issue of the *White Wing Messenger*.

Sister Mabe became the first auxiliary secretary to receive executive appointment at General Headquarters in December of 1929.⁴⁴ She served in this post until 1937. Eurice W. Bennett followed Sister Mabe in appointment to serve in this leadership role from 1937-1941. Three more women would serve in this role including Sylvia Vincent Hardin from 1941-1965, Elva Howard from 1965-1993, and, Catherine Payne from 1993-2012.

There were other acceptable leadership roles to which women could receive appointment. In 1929, the same year Clara Mabe was appointed as Women's Missionary Band Secretary, another young woman was selected as the Victory Leaders' Band Secretary. Over the years we witnessed several women and several men serve in this capacity which continues today as Youth Ministries.

Additionally, through the years women were appointed to serve in leadership roles to direct the international ministries of Sunday School and Children's Ministries. Through the first nearly hundred years of global outreach as ministry enlarged to include more than 130 nations, women regularly served in appointed executive ministerial leadership roles internationally.

However, one change that specifically impacted the role of women serving among the executive leadership came late in the 20th century with a reformation of global

⁴⁴ Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 2, 881.

inspirational leadership and at least two resulting restructurings of international offices ministry directors. Globally, seven male bishops were selected to serve as General Presbyters alongside of the General Overseer forming a new level of leadership in the Church of God of Prophecy known as Inspirational Leadership. With the General Overseer, the General Presbyters comprise a plurality of leadership with specificity in regional oversight of Africa, Asia (including Australia and the Pacific Ocean Islands), the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands, Central America and Spanish-speaking Caribbean Islands, Europe (including the CIS nations of Eastern Europe and the Middle East), North America, and South America. The resulting effect upon the structure of international offices led first to a reduction to five executive male ministerial leaders, thus directly impacting the number of women serving in executive ministerial leadership roles at the International Offices. The ministries that remained after the first restructuring were folded in under the five executive leaders and their positions were relegated to ministry directors/coordinators. A few years later another restructuring transitioned most of the former executive ministerial leadership roles to secondary roles of leadership under two male executive ministry directors who currently serve under the appointment of our General Overseer. Over a period of ten years, executive ministerial leadership roles transitioned from thirty-nine appointed positional leaders to seventeen, then to five, then to the two current executive ministry directors who are the only leaders currently appointed by the General Overseer. From the 1996 General Assembly until now, women have not served directly in executive leadership roles in the International Offices under General Overseer Appointment.

A Personal Perspective

When I was born, there were so many complications to the breach birth that the doctor did not believe I would live. He told my parents that if I somehow survived, they would eventually have to commit me to a life-care facility. Before my first-year birthday, the Lord had miraculously not only allowed me to live, but healed me of every debilitating diagnosis. From my first memories, I was taught that God had a specific plan for my life in ministry.

I experienced salvation, sanctification, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues about the age of seven. By twelve years, I was teaching a children's Sunday school class and rose to become the youth leader at my local church. I excelled in school and was a part of student leadership from third grade through high school. By the age of nineteen I had met and married the love of my life and fifteen months later we would enjoy the birth of our son.

John and I were both active in the ministry in our local church. We worked as a volunteer team alongside our pastors to bring support and excellence to training and establishing leadership developing ministries. John gave oversight to the Sunday school curriculum and small group ministry and I served directing an active youth ministry. While our efforts were more inspirational than scholarly, we worked together to invest our lives in mentoring those who were regularly coming to active faith in Christ.

In addition to the local church ministries, I accepted added responsibilities of coordinating ministries regionally for the coastal area of Virginia representing about a dozen churches. We were often given the opportunity to minister in state sponsored conventions, camps, and conferences. This five-year beginning investment to our

marriage and church ministries became the foundation of our established life-investment to ministry and leadership. The training and experience we received at our local church was a valuable foundation from the Lord. The liberty to seek the fullness in direction of the Holy Spirit for our lives and ministries and the encouragement to move in calling, obedience, and anointing is without comparison.

One year as we returned home from a state convention, John began to speak of a vision concerning a new direction in the call of God he sensed for us. We shared that call with our local church and received loving support. We gave notice to our secular managers and left our jobs. We moved out of our home and gave most of our belongings to family. The Lord opened an opportunity for transportation and we began traveling nationwide in evangelistic crusades, a ministry that would encompass the next eight years of our lives.

Our first year was amazing as we enjoyed anointed ministry and witnessed miraculous conversions, healings, and restorations. While we missed the loving covering of our local church, we experienced the support of their prayers. Something new was being birthed in us as we were often ministering every night of the week. As I was preaching more often, the anointing came with more freedom and liberty. The Holy Spirit was training and investing in us and we were excited to witness the results of His work.

Unfortunately, it was not long before we found ourselves in local churches and under ministries not as loving or supporting as we had known in Virginia. Sometimes after services I would overhear brethren speaking about my ministry specifically and the liberties I took in the pulpit and the altar prayer service. While exercising the gift of exhortation, I found myself quietly reflecting as to the parameters of “my place” in

ministry and leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy. While generally supported by the local pastors everywhere we traveled, I was told by male deacons and female ministers that I took too many liberties within the actual ministry in preaching, praying for the sick, and speaking deliverance to the possessed, even as we witnessed the blinded eyes opened, the deaf ears unstopped, the muted mouths speak, and the lame walk. In many of those days I was rarely supplied a strong supporting space for ministry from male leadership other than from my own husband, even though we received many more invitations than we could fulfill. I sometimes heard well intentioned ministers share with my husband that he should not allow an appointment that would position me to a more recognized rank of ministry than him. In fact, after eight years of nationwide evangelistic ministry, and being appointed as co-pastors in California, several male ministers and state leaders challenged the fact that such a team could be scriptural or successful.

It is difficult for me to imagine how I could have done anything differently in those days of early evangelistic crusades. I have tried to discern if I exercised lack of wisdom or if the Lord just covered me in passionate pursuit of ministry in such a way that I could not minister any differently.

As John and I served as co-pastors in California, we were also included in appointed leadership roles in state ministries for youth, music, and small group ministry programming overseeing local churches in California alongside our presiding state Bishop. Bishop Edwards told us that the Holy Spirit was shaping and forming new inspiration and providing a new platform for our ministry and leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy globally.

In 1993, we transitioned to Cleveland where I assumed the executive office of International Director of Women's Ministries under appointment of the General Overseer. Never once did Bishop Billy Murray limit the parameters of ministerial leadership within the context of my office or my gender. While I heard other voices rising from both male and female peers, the Holy Spirit used Bishop Murray to develop global leadership skills in me and to encourage me to return to scholarly studies.

Bishop Murray was also the General Overseer who breached history, tradition, and protocol to include me, the only woman in his executive leadership team, to be a part of my first pre-assembly IP meeting. When he introduced me at the meeting as an observer, since females are not ordained bishops in the Church of God of Prophecy, I was mostly welcomed. Not many minutes had passed before a bishop approached the microphone to announce to the more than 100 international leaders that there was someone present who should find her place barefoot, pregnant, and back in the kitchen where she belonged. I wanted to leave the room, but a senior bishop was seated next to me and he put his hand on my arm and told me to sit confidently in the calling of God. At the break, many of those in that meeting sought me out to speak of the integrity and maturity of leadership I had displayed by allowing the Lord to rebuke the slanderous implication. However, to my knowledge, none of these leaders confronted the man who had openly challenged my presence in that executive level meeting.

While women who serve in executive leadership positions in the nations have experienced the tension and disappointment of gender bias, and the restraint of liberty and acceptance in ministry, we also have hungered for the instruction found for rising to such a calling through the wisdom of the Word of God and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

In His Word, God provides the resources and examples of faith that speak louder in our hearing than the voices of accusation and discouragement. God also continually uses key individuals that are sent to speak life, power, and refinement along the journey of discovery to which He has called us.

These and many other personal experiences within the church of God of Prophecy in ministry and leadership have laid the foundation for my doctoral studies and prepared me to work on this particular project. Because of these experiences, challenges, and hurdles, I am driven to analyze the issues concerning women in ministry and particularly in executive leadership. I hope to offer testimony, analysis, and solutions for future generations of women in ministry and leadership, and open doors for future freedom to follow the Spirit's leading wherever He may lead them without hesitation.

Thesis Projection

This thesis, a project of passion and hopeful expectation, is designed to research, analyze, identify, and offer solutions to the challenges of women in executive leadership roles/status positions of appointment by the General Overseer with respect to the ministries within the Church of God of Prophecy. I hope to provide a witness among Christian ministry and leadership of women seeking to fulfill the call and purpose of God in leadership within the parameters of relationship among the Body of Christ within the Church of God of Prophecy.

Over the past nearly four decades, the presbytery community within the Church of God of Prophecy has made numerous commitments to recognizing calling and anointing in endorsing gender impartiality and removing

discrimination against women in leadership. Acknowledging that creative efforts exist to distinguish calling and provide inspired positioning inclusive for women, as well as providing educational opportunities that lead to credentialing, the consequences of a gender breach within the Church of God of Prophecy is that women have not been allowed to participate fully in decisions that shape their lives, families, church communities, and regional/national ministries.

I expect to find that the church body, including states and nations are not capitalizing on the full potential of women who represent more than half of their fellowship. I hope to encourage an active effort to incorporate the participation of women in executive ministerial leadership, including women's perspective at all levels of decision-making.

Hopefully, this thesis will offer inspiration, information, and practical/concrete suggestions and strategies to pastors, denominational leaders, leaders of specific ministries, and leadership of Christian movements who provide oversight to rising young women, as to what God can do through chosen female vessels who are called to executive ministerial leadership. Perhaps it will further encourage these same leaders to more effectively envision executive ministerial leadership opportunities for women.

My methodology will include texts from scholars who have been examining the diminishing opportunities of female inclusive leadership within the maturing Pentecostal movement. These examinations will include Aída Besançon Spencer who suggests that when it comes to women examining the challenges of women in leadership roles/status and positions of appointment, there are those

who deem the personal interest and zeal as uncomfortable and unscholarly.⁴⁵ Her examination and conclusions from the biblical texts provide insight for recognizing God's original intention for women and men.

Evelyn and Frank Stagg's work, while examining the role of women in the world Jesus entered and the world Jesus came to create, is addressed to the church today which brings perspective from the past and gives directions for the present and the future.⁴⁶ Their work will provide an exegesis of relevant texts from the examples of God's use and positioning of women throughout the Old and New Testaments which will be most helpful in chapter three.

The careful considerations by Stanley Grenz and Denise Kjesbo examining the biblical, historical, and practical concerns with respect to women in ordained ministry and positional ministerial leadership enlightens those on all sides of the issue. Their conclusions insist women were ordained to serve as full partners with men through a mutuality of leadership. These observations will also be used effectively in chapters two and three.⁴⁷ Additionally, I will be using texts to provide a biblical and theological framework on leadership, as well as articles from scholarly journals with perspectives on women serving in executive ministerial leadership roles.

The parameters of the thesis project design will provide a test evaluation on how we determine and measure the challenge of providing room for female inclusive

⁴⁵ Aída Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1985), 7.

⁴⁶ Evelyn & Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 9.

⁴⁷ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 16.

leadership at the executive ministerial level at the International Offices (under the appointment of the General Overseer) and in the states and nations who recognize and appoint such positional leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy.

The first process for gathering data will include a survey questionnaire that targets women who have served previously, or who currently serve in executive ministerial leadership or appointed ministry positions within the Church of God of Prophecy. The survey will consist of questions focused on what led each woman to seek such a leadership role and what she has experienced as she has served in ministerial leadership at the executive level at International and/or Regional and National Offices. This is a small constituency of eleven women who are still accessible to provide data. Perhaps this number alone reflects the need for this kind of evaluation.

Some of the questions directed to this group will focus on the spiritual formation they received concerning women fulfilling the role of executive ministerial leadership and some of the obstacles that were experienced in fulfilling the role in executive ministerial leadership. Additional questions will focus on recognizing the effect of calling and gifting within the context of the role of executive leadership.

The second measure for gathering data will include a questionnaire sent to current State, Regional, and National Presbyters who comprise the International Presbytery of the Church of God of Prophecy and serve as presiding bishops in their states, regions, and nations. I expect data from these surveys will provide a measured response on how this body of leaders are making room for gifted women to serve in executive ministerial and appointed leadership. This questionnaire will consist of five questions and will hopefully

yield information and practical suggestions and strategies that respond to the challenge of positioning women in executive ministerial leadership.

Questions included in this section will hopefully bring awareness to the absence/limitations of women serving among executive ministerial leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy. Also included will be a measure of what they believe the Bible says about women serving executive ministerial leadership within the church. Also included will be a fair evaluation of what they might be doing within their context of leadership to include women in executive appointed ministerial leadership.

A final questionnaire will be sent to our current General Overseer and current General Presbyters (who comprise the highest level of leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy globally), to evaluate the ratio of women to men serving in executive ministerial leadership within the context of their administrative responsibility in the Church of God of Prophecy. A question will also examine their scriptural foundations concerning women serving in the capacity of executive ministerial leadership within the context of their administrative responsibility in the Church of God of Prophecy.

The intent of the project is to provide perspective and assistance in bringing awareness to the issue as well as formulating strategies to recognize and position women in the future with respect to their calling and giftings concerning executive ministerial leadership.

My expectations of the questionnaires directed toward women currently serving in executive ministerial leadership will hopefully provide insight and practical suggestions for the challenges they are currently facing. My expectations from the questionnaire directed toward the targeted International Presbyters is first an awareness concerning this

issue and then determining strategies toward putting in place a process of affecting a change. I suspect the final interviews of all will provide a framework of what is already being put into place in the more progressive areas of our global work that might effectively work worldwide.

Conclusion

As I have shared so freely the active voice of God in my story, I must also share the biblical foundation He provided in my search through the narratives and examples in His Word. I was hungry to know how women were used of the Lord and what the Bible could teach me concerning the role of woman in ministry and leadership. I wanted to understand how women in the Old Testament were called and given opportunity to serve in ministry and leadership. I was interested to study the manner and ministry of Jesus with respect to women and how He recognized, ministered to, and empowered women to minister and lead. I longed to discover from the Holy Spirit the influence and ministry allowed women concerning ministry and leadership in the Early Church. Some of these personal studies continue even to this day and have become a part of not only my personal ministry and opportunities in leadership, but a focus for my doctoral study and this thesis.

From her work, *In A Different Voice*, Carol Gilligan evaluates the actuality of being human in the recognition of having a voice.⁴⁸ Her recognition of the value attributed to the voice is dependent upon listening and being heard. Gilligan's work concerning voice suggested that adolescent girls were fearful that if they were to speak

⁴⁸ Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), xvi.

what they were feeling, no one would honor them or want to be with them. The resulting tendency of these girls and also women became one of relinquishing what they did know, and had experienced to rather use their voices to fit into appropriate images of relationship and goodness, thus allowing men to be the defining voice for humanity.⁴⁹ Ultimately, Gilligan cited a source whose sequence concerning a woman's identity became defined by the man who would "rescue her from emptiness and loneliness" resulting in the reality that the woman comes to be known with direct reference to her relationships with others.⁵⁰ As I studied Gilligan's work again recently, I recognized that our fellowship had culpability when it came to encouraging women who had been called and anointed for ministry and leadership roles to rather submit to culture's expectations.

In 2012, I learned that the role of Women's Ministries at the International Offices for the Church of God of Prophecy was going to be transitioned from an international focus to a more regional direction. While I was appointed by a male ministry director to an unprecedented position for women in our fellowship to direct the ministries of Global Missions within our international network, the role was no longer an upper-level executive leadership role as it had been when a man served in the office.

For now, we move toward a new Assembly and another International Presbyter meeting in 2018 and in future International Assemblies for the Church of God of Prophecy as the Lord tarries. There will be other crises and defining moments when women will be challenged to hear not only the voices of dissension and criticism, but to align our hearing to listen for the clearer Voice and respond in anointing and obedience to the call of leadership. It is a worthy calling, even for daughters of the Lord.

⁴⁹ Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, xxvi.

⁵⁰ Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, 12.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord,
who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful,
putting me into the ministry;
1 Timothy 1:12 KJV*

Introduction

One of the distinctives for the emerging Pentecostal movement at the turn of the twentieth century was the significance given to the production and publication of printed literature. One example of these publications includes *The Apostolic Faith*, a newsletter by the *Azusa Street Mission* which contained news and testimonies from the ongoing revival, and sermons by Seymour and others associated with the movement. Another example is *The Bridal Call Foursquare*, a monthly magazine from the ministry of Aimee Semple McPherson which focused on evangelistic articles with a goal to “reach everyone.”¹ Today, many of these historical literature resources serve as windows for students to observe some of the inner workings and foundations of the ministries from the past that might otherwise be unknown.

Publishing was an ongoing interest of A. J. Tomlinson, founder and first General Overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy, as he recognized that the printed word encouraged support for many successful ministries. His first periodical, *Samson’s Foxes*, (1901-1902) informed supporters of his holiness ministry in Culberson, North Carolina, “in the interest of the ‘Hundred Fold’ Gospel and the speedy evangelization of the

¹ Aimee Semple McPherson, “The Bridal Call,” *Consortium of Pentecostal Archives*, last updated 2018, accessed January 22, 2018, <https://pentecostalarchives.org/collections/bridalcallfoursquare/>.

mountain districts of North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and the world.”² In 1910, Tomlinson was instrumental in launching the periodical *The Evening Light and Church of God Evangel*, which shortened its name in 1911 to the *Church of God Evangel* and over the years until today has “served as the primary voice of the Church of God.”³ This early publication for the Church of God began in a rented twenty-by-thirty feet frame building across the street from Tomlinson’s home in Cleveland, Tennessee.

In September 1923, after the division between the Church of God and the movement that would become the Church of God of Prophecy, Tomlinson organized efforts to begin production of *The White Wing Messenger*, which served as a source of communication and connectivity among the growing fellowship and included lead articles by Tomlinson, editorials, sermons, articles on doctrinal themes, reports of ministry activities, and testimonies. *The White Wing Messenger* continues to be the official publication of the Church of God of Prophecy.

Under Tomlinson’s leadership, both the Church of God and the Church of God of Prophecy established publishing houses and presses to produce newsletters that became tools of encouragement and accountability. Additionally, among other publishing projects, the publishing houses printed minutes from the annual assembling of the leadership and ministry in the formation of these two denominations that are linked through their common beginning.

These collections of minutes have been of great benefit in preserving historical accounts and serving as a foundation for producing a historical record of organization and

² A. J. Tomlinson, “Samson’s Foxes,” *Consortium of Pentecostal Archives*, accessed January 22, 2018, <https://pentecostalarchives.org/collections/samsonsfoxes/>.

³ A. J. Tomlinson, “Church of God Evangel,” *Consortium of Pentecostal Archives*, accessed January 22, 2018, <https://pentecostalarchives.org/collections/cogevangel/>.

polity. Further, these publications were most helpful in discerning the way and tracing the foundation in which women originally rose to ministerial leadership status and were appointed to executive leadership roles within the Church of God of Prophecy which pertains to this thesis.

Another category of resources that have been helpful in writing this thesis are journal articles. Some of the articles highlighted in this chapter include early testimonials and news updates that document women functioning in executive leadership roles within the church, some with recognized appointment and others without. Other journals deal with specific areas relating to the challenge of women in leading ministerial roles in the church. The journals included in this work further help discover the biblical support through scholarly work of theologians in their examination of Scripture made useful in chapter three.

The final category of resources that have been vital to the completion of this thesis includes scholarly texts with specific examination concerning women in ministry and executive-type ministerial leadership positioning. Included in this category are resources that provide biblical examination with greater specificity to distinguish women who led, ministered in, and were recognized to operate in these kinds of roles.

These resources give a fuller understanding of the issues women have often encountered when they are called to ministry in general and ministerial leadership specifically within the context of executive appointment as examined in this work.

Historical Works within Early Pentecostalism

The support of published newsletters produced among early Pentecostals provide a window inside those ministries paralleling the progress of the early pioneers of our emerging movement. As noted in chapter one, our fellowship interconnected with the Azusa Revival when G. B. Cashwell's ministry visit to Cleveland resulted in the Spirit baptism of A. J. Tomlinson.

Reading the periodicals provides exciting witness as the testimonies reveal the outpouring Pentecost. These historical records document well the presence of women serving in principal ministry and ministerial leadership in many of the early Pentecostal movements. In fact, some of the more noted periodicals highlighted many more printed submissions of updates on ministry from women than from men.⁴

In the second issue of *The Apostolic Faith*, every page is filled with the miraculous testimonies of women being used to lead revivals and mission crusades in cities and states throughout America. One article shares about women traveling to Africa after receiving the language of nations there.⁵ Another article tells the testimony of a 14-year-old young girl who was saved, sanctified and baptized with the Holy Ghost who went out, taking a band of workers with her, and led a revival effort in which one

⁴ Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, Ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Revised and expanded edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 1206.

⁵ Mrs. J. W. Hutchins and Leila McKinney, "Testimonies of Outgoing Missionaries," *The Apostolic Faith*, vol. 1 no. 2 (October 1906), 1, accessed April 4, 2018, [http://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Independent/Apostolic%20Faith%20\(Azusa%20Street\)/Unregistered/1906/FPHC/1906_10.pdf#search='The Apostolic Faith'](http://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Independent/Apostolic%20Faith%20(Azusa%20Street)/Unregistered/1906/FPHC/1906_10.pdf#search='The Apostolic Faith').

hundred and ninety souls were saved.⁶ The majority of the first missionaries to go out just months after the beginning of the Azusa Street revival were self-supporting women.⁷ The urgency of early Pentecostalism in view of the soon return of Christ, meant that every voice was necessary to bring sinners to repentance and conversion. “All efforts were needed . . . giving women a crucial role within the movement.”⁸

This same impetus of witness is found in the testimonies contained in Cashwell’s editorial in the *Bridegroom’s Messenger* as he commends and requests united prayer for those who are serving in mission efforts all over the world in foreign fields. His recognition of these servants is noted with equal concern calling the names of women along with men distinguishing their work and ministry.⁹

The Pentecostal experience offered a model of cooperative ministry and empowerment where authority and recognition were granted to the “priesthood of all believers and the empowering and legitimizing experience of the Spirit that is available to all, irrespective of gender.”¹⁰ From the inception, women took a leading role, “sometimes working under conditions that were too difficult for men.”¹¹

Several such women rise among the early Pentecostals who became proficient in communicating the fresh move of the Holy Ghost through pulpit ministries, media

⁶ Unknown, “Back to Pentecost,” *The Apostolic Faith*, vol. 1 no. 2 (October 1906), 3, accessed April 4, 2018 [http://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Independent/Apostolic%20Faith%20\(Azusa%20Street\)/Unregistered/1906/FPHC/1906_10.pdf#search=The Apostolic Faith](http://pentecostalarchives.org/digitalPublications/USA/Independent/Apostolic%20Faith%20(Azusa%20Street)/Unregistered/1906/FPHC/1906_10.pdf#search=The%20Apostolic%20Faith).

⁷ Allan Anderson. “The Origins of Pentecostalism and its Global Spread in the Early Twentieth Century.” Graduate Institute for Theology and Religion, University of Birmingham. Lecture for the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, (5 October 2014), 5, 6.

⁸ Burgess and Van Der Maas, Ed., *New International Dictionary*, 1205.

⁹ G. B. Cashwell, “To Our Dear Brethren In The Foreign Fields,” *The Bridegroom’s Messenger*, vol. 1 no. 12 (April 15, 1908), 1.

¹⁰ Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 93.

¹¹ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1988), 487.

outlets, and literary publications circulated during the time. These women were positioned to be recognized leaders in dynamic Pentecostal movements.

One such woman was Maria Woodworth-Etter. A woman ahead of her time, and with little formal education, Maria began her ministry in 1880 at the age of 35.¹² While few women were permitted to the pulpit in her time, her dynamic preaching and remarkable faith opened opportunities for Maria to become a legendary evangelist.

In her first fourteen years of ministry, Maria had traveled the United States from coast to coast three times. Making conversions her interest in ministry, she experienced a Pentecostal power that was followed by hundreds coming to Christ. She believed and preached that if believers would come as did the believers on the Day of Pentecost, they would experience the same Pentecostal outpouring. Calls came from around the nation requesting Maria to come and minister. One particular crusade in Texas that hosted thousands daily and nightly continued for almost five months.¹³

Maria published her sermons in books and many recognized her as a grandmother in the faith. During the Azusa revival, Maria provided a seasoned name in evangelism. Most saw her as a unique vessel of God who “exercised tremendous spiritual authority over sin, disease, and demons.”¹⁴ Articles published in the Assembly of God newsletters remarkedly understood that she was not trying to build her own kingdom, only trying to allow for the advancement of the Gospel as recorded in the Book of Acts. Many were supernaturally healed under her ministry.

¹² Wayne E. Warner, “A Powerful Voice in the Pentecostal Vanguard,” *Enrichment Journal*, (Winter 1999), accessed April 4, 2018, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/199901/086_woodsworth_etter.cfm.

¹³ Warner, “A Powerful Voice.”

¹⁴ Warner, “A Powerful Voice.”

Despite the powerful ministry and the honor of those under her ministry and leadership, Maria understood that there were men in the Pentecostal movement, who if they could manipulate their way in ministry, that she and other women would not be allowed such authority.

“David Lee Floyd, who attended Maria's meeting in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1913, told me that the local leadership—which included E.N. Bell, D.C.O. Opperman, and Howard Goss—appreciated Maria's ministry but was careful not to give her ‘too much authority.’”¹⁵

While Maria enjoyed a welcomed acceptance of Assemblies of God congregations and others, she remained ordained in her independent work and before her death in 1924, she established what is now Lakeview Temple in Indianapolis.¹⁶

Perhaps one of the more celebrated female church planters is Pandita Sarasvati Ramabai, a great Indian leader, reformer, translator of the Bible into an Indian language, social activist, and founder of the Revival Center at the Mukti Mission.¹⁷ Pandita devoted her life to helping young girls and young women in India, founding a home for widows and orphan girls, ministering at one time to more than 1,000 residents.¹⁸ From 1905-1907 there was a revival at Pandita's Mukti Mission in Pune, India where young women who were baptized by the Spirit saw visions, fell into trances, and spoke in tongues. The Mukti Pentecostal revival was predominately a revival for women and by women. Ramabai both influenced and attracted other women into active Christian ministry, not

¹⁵ Warner, “A Powerful Voice.”

¹⁶ Warner, “A Powerful Voice.”

¹⁷ Hector Ortiz, “Lecture Notes on History of Global Pentecostalism” Gordon-Conwell Doctor of Ministry Program, Dominican Republic, 19-23 January 2015.

¹⁸ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi and Justo L. González, *To All Nations from All Nations: A History of the Christian Missionary Movement* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 244.

only among her own countrywomen but also foreigners like the independent Methodist missionary Minnie Abrams, who had a profound impact on early Pentecostalism.¹⁹

Ramabai's organization produced many female Indian missionaries who ministered throughout the nation. The revival remained the main source of Indians working in Pentecostal missions for at least a decade. By 1910, there were 125 young women training in the Mukti Bible school to become full-time Christian workers.²⁰ Through her work, a Pentecostal network was established throughout India noting the significant and notable work of Pentecostal missionaries for the high number of native missionaries who served their own people.²¹

There are other names that rise among women who were recognized for their unique top-level leadership and liberty to move in the Spirit around the turn of the twentieth century. Catherine Booth and her husband co-founded the Salvation Army and transformed social work among the poor and impoverished.

Aimee Semple McPherson was a major world evangelist of influence from the early Pentecostal movement and is recognized as the founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel and visionary of Angelus Temple. Remembered better perhaps for her media celebrity and her missteps in relationships, Sister Aimee used her celebrity to provide relief efforts during the Great Depression that provided food, shelter, and clinics to those in need, with estimates at providing meals for more than 1.5 million people.²² In times of disasters of great magnitude, she mobilized relief efforts to provide

¹⁹ Anderson, *Ends of the Earth*, 105.

²⁰ Anderson, *Ends of the Earth*, 106.

²¹ Cardoza-Orlandi and González, *To All Nations from All Nations*, 245.

²² "Her Story, About Aimee Semple McPherson," *The Foursquare Church*, accessed on April 4, 2018, https://www.foursquare.org/sister_aimee.

substantial humanitarian relief of all kinds globally. “She explored new technologies and became the first woman to preach a sermon over the radio.” I could fill pages with testimonies of the supernatural work of the Holy Ghost witnessed through her ministry in healing and salvation, however, most Christian leaders dismiss her influence because of the accusations and scandals concerning her private life. I don’t condone the scandals that were a part of Simple-McPherson’s ministry, but I do question the often double-standard of criticism women receive as weaker vessels when many male evangelists in early Pentecostalism had difficulties in their personal relationships, but it never damaged their reputations in such devastation as Semple-McPherson endured. Even today, powerful men as Pentecostal higher levels of leadership have experienced similar relationship challenges of infidelity and divorce and yet don’t bear such harsh condemnation nor the end of their ongoing ministries.

I discovered two commonalities among the early Pentecostal publications with direct implications to this thesis. One was the recognition that the great achievements of women in ministry and executive leadership have often been more acceptable outside of the denominational structure in the independent and free churches of Global Pentecostalism. It would seem the one exception to organizational and denominational restrictions were limited on women who served in the capacity as missionaries. Anderson suggests this response is due in part to the mission position being less threatening and less authoritative within their organizations.²³

For years I have been encouraged to voice the repercussions of such limitations while requesting new and inspirational exploration of the biblical manuscripts that have

²³ Anderson, *Ends of the Earth*, 112.

been used as justification for restricting women in pulpit ministries and higher areas of leadership. I have witnessed change, though often slow in coming and with great objection. The challenge is that my female voice carries little influence in this context. In some of our doctoral joint class projects, men in our working group expressed outrage at the limitations put on vessels of the Holy Spirit within my own fellowship due exclusively to their gender. I expect those are the voices being trained with a correct Pentecostal hermeneutic that will garner the needed respect for attention.

Glazier observes that Pentecostalism is a subtle revolution that induces a great number of social, cultural, and psychological changes; he encourages its potential to become a revolutionary political force.²⁴ Even so, Lord, I hold expectation with hope.

The second commonality I found was a lack of historically recorded and available models of women in ministry in the higher levels of leadership among the Pentecostal movement. While I have highlighted a few notable women, they are very few in comparison to the recorded names of men who influenced the spread of Pentecostalism, leaving us with an incomplete history.

Unfortunately, Hollenweger proposes, the movement kept poor records of female inclusive ministry and upper leadership.²⁵ Anderson laments this global hidden treasure of the Pentecostal history that needs to be rediscovered.²⁶ Sadly, he adds that in many cases it is too late to complete an accurate history of the past, as the memories have slipped away unremembered and their memory is now very difficult (if not impossible) to

²⁴ Stephen D. Glazier, *Perspectives on Pentecostalism: Case Studies from the Caribbean and Latin America*. "Modernization and the Pentecostal Movement in Jamaica by William Wedenoja, Southwest Missouri State University" (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1980), 41.

²⁵ Walter Hollenweger. *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 76.

²⁶ Anderson, "The Origins of Pentecostalism," 5, 6.

recover.²⁷ It is a challenge we face concerning our distorted history of Pentecostal origins in our documentary sources. Globally, much of this history depends entirely upon newsletters, reports, and periodicals of the western Pentecostals and their missionaries, attempting to garner financial support to continue in missionary efforts, leading to cases of incomplete information as well as possibilities of misinterpretation. The challenge becomes for us to make a difference now for the future by recording the oral traditions and stories of those who are still alive and who remember the past.

Historical Works from within the Church of God of Prophecy

As noted previously, several historical records of our ecclesiological efforts provide the actual support for including women in executive ministerial leadership within our movement.

C. T. Davidson was appointed Church Historian for the Church of God of Prophecy in the Sixty-Fifth Assembly in 1970. His first published release in the appointed role was volume 1 of *Upon This Rock*, the first of a three-volume effort that provided the first official, comprehensive, historical work concerning the Church of God of Prophecy. In 1973, at the time of printing, Davidson had already been a “faithful member” since 1932, and it was noted in the foreword that he had been active in full-time ministry all those years.²⁸

In the first half of volume 1, Davidson began from the Genesis narrative progressing through the work of the Early Church. The second half of volume 1 traces the

²⁷ Anderson, “The Origins of Pentecostalism,” 6.

²⁸ C.T. Davidson, *Upon This Rock*, vol. 1 (Cleveland, TN; White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1973), 11.

beginnings of the Church of God from before the turn of the 20th Century through the disruption in Tomlinson's leadership in 1922-1923. Much of what is used from volume 1 in this thesis is a part of our shared history with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee and represents the early polity decisions concerning a woman's role in ministry and executive leadership delineated in chapter one. Further, volume 1 contains a confirmation of General Assembly overviews and important business acts, as well as a record for those who were appointed to executive leadership. As noted in Chapter 1 of this thesis, that included female missionaries, evangelists, church planters, pastors, and two women who were appointed to serve in national executive administrative work in the nations of Egypt and China respectively.

Volume 2 of *Upon This Rock*, published in 1974, details the history of the Church of God of Prophecy through the years of 1923-1943, including the death of A. J. Tomlinson and the selection of the younger son, Milton A. Tomlinson to the office of General Overseer. Volume 3, published in 1976, is an overview of the years of change and growth for the fellowship through the decade 1943-1953. This 3-volume set is a vital historical review by one who was a witness to most of the events later recorded.

Perhaps of greatest value from Davidson's texts for use in this thesis is the meticulously indexed work in the back of each volume where the names of appointed executive leaders are recorded annually with notation concerning their areas of responsibility. Davidson records the women who were appointed in executive leadership roles as national administrators alongside the men who were appointed in those roles.

As noted previously, often in my research, I find a lack of historically recorded and available models of women in ministry and higher levels of leadership in the Church

of God of Prophecy specifically, and among the Pentecostal movement in general.

Perhaps in some part this is due to the oral liturgy of the early Pentecostal movement and in part due to narrators of the narratives who sometimes forget.

Elaine Storkey questions the agenda concerning the limitations of female models of leadership.²⁹ In her work at women in leadership, she notes the challenges of *who* sets the agenda, *which* agenda is set, and the *timing* for when women will be recognized in leadership positioning. Storkey openly wonders what a biblical theology has to say about a leadership in the Church and society that is not accurate.³⁰ In this respect, I am particularly thankful for Davidson's meticulous example for the Church of God of Prophecy. I am additionally blessed to have known C. T. Davidson personally and to have witnessed his integrity and his attention to detail.

In the Introduction of the *Book of Minutes*, the Publisher suggests the need of an abridged compilation of the minutes of all Assemblies to supply much needed information concerning the early history of the organization.³¹ A brief history follows that records the beginnings of the new movement as three men and five women presented themselves to take the New Testament for their rule of faith and practice.³² This text, as noted in Chapter 1 of this thesis, becomes the historical documentation concerning the use and appointment of women in executive leadership roles in the first thirteen Assemblies in the early years of the organization from 1906-1917. It is also the

²⁹ Elaine Storkey, "Women in Leadership," *Challenges of Black Pentecostal Leadership in the 21st Century* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2013), 5.

³⁰ Storkey, "Women in Leadership," 70.

³¹ J. S. Llewellyn, ed., *Book of Minutes* (Cleveland, TN; Church of God Publishing House, 1922), 6.

³² Llewellyn, *Book of Minutes*, 8.

documentation of many of the polity changes concerning the liberty and/or restrictions that followed for women in ministry and under appointment in leadership roles.

As the *Book of Minutes* above represents an abridged compilation of the proceedings of the first thirteen Assemblies with publishing by the Church of God when we were one body, there came a need to provide a more complete and accurate compilation of Assembly minutes through the years from the vantage point of the Church of God of Prophecy. In 1988, Buford M. Johnson, serving as Press Editor at the International Offices assumed the immense responsibility of producing the publication, *Eighty-Two General Assemblies of the Church of God of Prophecy: Historical Highlights, 1906-1987*. This text provides documentation details concerning women's licensure and executive leadership roles within the Church of God of Prophecy not listed in the abridged minutes. One such detail is recorded in Chapter 1 of this thesis concerning women engaged in ministry/leadership being recognized and supplied with licensure along with men serving in corresponding roles.³³

In my project proposal, I suggested the inclusion of two historical resources from the Church of God of Prophecy that I believed at the time would be significant sources of information. The first one, *The Glorious Church of God*, was written by Milton A. Tomlinson, the younger son of our founder who at his father's death became our General Overseer, or international presiding bishop. His work was a look back at the beginnings of our fellowship with specificity concerning his father's early work. The second work, *A. J. Tomlinson*, was written by Lillie Duggar, who served as the private secretary and administrative assistant to A. J. Tomlinson for most of his years of service as the General

³³ Buford M. Johnson, *Eighty-Two General Assemblies of the Church of God of Prophecy: Historical Highlights, 1906-1987* (Cleveland, TN; White Wing Publishing House and Press, 1988), 4.

Overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy. Her work documents her narrative of and perspective on his leadership. In my process of research for this thesis, the better documented ecclesiological and historical resources for use were the three I have noted above so these two prospective resources are included for information, however, not included for documentation.

Resources Specifically Focused on Women's Roles in Ministry and Leadership

In *What Women Want: Pentecostal Women Ministers Speak For Themselves*, Kimberly Ervin Alexander and James P. Bowers conduct practical research that focuses on the expressed views of Pentecostal women in ministry and executive leadership.³⁴ Alexander and Bowers confront the challenge of limitations placed on women in leadership concerning direct access and influence in the decision-making processes of the church. They note the politics of the Church of God and other Pentecostal denominations that restrict women “from having significant input in places of power, decision-making and executive leadership.”³⁵ Alexander and Bowers document that 87% of women surveyed believe that their gender should not bar them from leading the church at denominational executive levels; only 51% of men surveyed agreed.³⁶

The authors note that some women in leadership after serving in silence for so long without support or appreciation, have left the Pentecostal movement to go to other areas where they have more freedom in which to use their giftings.³⁷ I have witnessed this

³⁴ Kimberly Ervin Alexander and James P. Bowers, *What Women Want: Pentecostal Women Ministers Speak For Themselves* (Lanham: The Seymour Press, 2013), 21.

³⁵ Alexander and Bowers, *What Women Want*, 21.

³⁶ Alexander and Bowers, *What Women Want*, 57.

³⁷ Alexander and Bowers, *What Women Want*, 14.

scenario all too often, especially among young women with whom I have served. The grief we bear is the loss of anointed and willing vessels among us as leaders and models of leadership, who had an undeniable call and desire to serve their church to their greatest capacity and to be treated with respect in full ministry partnership. Much too often, some of these excellent women of leadership have left the ministry altogether and put their giftings to use in the secular marketplace.

In chapter six, Alexander and Bowers process the received data and personal testimonies of women serving in leadership within the Church of God and the larger Pentecostal community. They provide seven recommendations with which to understand the status and expectations of women who serve in leadership.³⁸ With considerable redaction, these include the importance of voice, empowerment without personal agenda, affirmation for service at all levels of leadership, perspective in biblical theology, a support system, healing and sincere repentance for past male-centered domination and bias, and recognition in missional partnership.

Alexander and Bowers examine a number of the historical polities of the Church of God of Prophecy concerning women in ministry and executive leadership as it comprises our first twenty years of shared denominational beginnings. Further, though their work examines a larger perspective among the greater Pentecostal movement, much of the responses from those surveyed recently reflect many the challenging polities of the Church of God of Prophecy still in place with direct impact upon women in ministry and executive leadership. Many of the polities examined in chapter 1 of this thesis can be found and are still being reinforced by the information presented in this text.

³⁸ Alexander and Bowers, *What Women Want*, 124-128.

In *Beyond the Curse: Women Called To Ministry*, Aída Spencer adds insight to the continuing conversation concerning the gifts women offer to take the Gospel message throughout the world. *Beyond the Curse* examines systematic scholarly work that covers many important topics for women in ministry and leadership, and her observations concerning examples of women in authority found in the New Testament are of particular interest for chapter three of this work.

Among other topics, Spencer deals with the creation narrative in Eden, Jesus' manner with women, and the problem texts from Paul's writings in 1 Corinthians and in 1 Timothy. However, it is her work concerning women in roles of leadership and authority found in chapter 4 that informed significant input on this thesis.

Spencer contends that Christian women in the first century were included as students learning religious truths, speaking in public, teaching, and were approved for and held authoritative positions.³⁹ Spencer suggests that women were gifted from God for positions which may require ordination in this day.⁴⁰ She makes the case that Christ allowed the roles of leadership for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry and the building up of the body according to the injunction found in Ephesians 4:12.⁴¹ Her contention to this end deals with the purpose of the Lord's gifting of leadership to women in order for them to develop those giftings to be approved and use them for the strengthening of the Body.⁴²

³⁹ Aída Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1985), 96.

⁴⁰ Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 97.

⁴¹ Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 99.

⁴² Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 99.

In the preface of the text, Spencer questions why God would want women to be misled to believe that *He* would limit their gifting for leadership in the church and their affirmation for the leadership they are supplying.⁴³ It is a question I have never considered, possibly due to the personal realization that it has never been the Lord who was limiting the leadership giftings He imparted in me. However, she does examine a challenge I have often experienced. As noted in chapter one, Spencer suggests the possible discomfort for those who excuse our sincere scholarly pursuits in research relating to women who serve in executive leadership to our own zeal, agenda, and personal interest.⁴⁴ She seems to balance those suppositions by suggesting that justice and vindication are not diametrically opposed to passion and study, and concerns herself with being a careful and accurate scholar who adds to the discussion and perspective. It is a productive lesson and model to consider.

It was not my desire to complete my doctoral work with this very important issue as the theme for my thesis for these similar suppositions noted. More than once in my years of leadership, it has been suggested as a personal agenda. However, as I have progressed in the research for this thesis, I am reminded of the critical and destructive power wielded in the oppression often relegated toward women who are attempting to live out the calling and anointing of leadership in their own ministries. If for that reason alone, I have been thankful for the caring direction of my mentor.

In *Women in the World of Jesus*, Frank and Evelyn Stagg provide a joint effort of design and research coauthored by husband and wife. Principle research was examined

⁴³ Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 7.

⁴⁴ Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 7.

independently and then evaluated jointly as to relevance and meaning.⁴⁵ As noted in the preface, Frank produced the first draft of the manuscript and Evelyn completed the final editing.⁴⁶ The work that was produced was fashioned regarding the gifting at work in each of them and is a model of mutual respect considering calling and gifting.

The Staggs divide their work into nearly three equal parts where they examine the context of how things were for women living in the world before Jesus came, the way in which Jesus saw and related to women, and the role of women within the context of the Early Church.⁴⁷ While the Staggs admit that their work of examining the role of women is addressed to the church, they hope that it will reach beyond the church with the possibility of its influence to inform perspective from the past and give direction for the present and the future.⁴⁸

In this thesis, their work will provide an exegesis from relevant texts of examples of God's use and positioning of women in ministerial leadership throughout the Old and New Testaments which will be most helpful in chapter three. Their emphasis of the secure centrality of the empty tomb narratives found in all four Gospels, where women are given significant place at the very foundation of Christian faith and witness, provides incomparable directive to new impetus given to the role of women in leadership forward.⁴⁹

Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo in *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry*, address the question of women in ministry and ordained

⁴⁵ Evelyn & Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 7.

⁴⁶ Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 7.

⁴⁷ Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 9.

⁴⁸ Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 9.

⁴⁹ Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 159-160.

leadership from three vantage points: church history, Scripture, and Christian theology.⁵⁰ Their thesis suggests that the historical, biblical and theological studies join, “not only to allow but to insist that women serve as full partners with men in all dimensions of the church’s life and ministry.”⁵¹ Among the resources used in this thesis, Grenz and Kjesbo are perhaps the strongest advocates in support of women serving in executive leadership roles alongside of men.⁵²

We believe that the Sovereign Spirit calls women, together with men, to positions of leadership in the church and that God’s Spirit bestows on women and men the gifts necessary to fulfill such responsibilities. Consequently, to categorically deny women the opportunity to obey the Spirit places us in the position not only of acting unjustly toward women but, more important, of standing in opposition to the work of the sovereign Holy Spirit.⁵³

Grenz and Kjesbo clearly articulate their belief and make the case for the inclusion of women in “all aspects of church life, including pastoral ministry and church leadership.”⁵⁴ They discuss the polarization of Evangelicals into two clearly defined groups: egalitarians, those who believe that all facets of ministry should be open to women; and complementarians, those who believe that women are limited to serve in supportive roles.⁵⁵ They also support a supposition I make in Chapter 1 of this thesis that renewal movements allow greater female involvement in leadership in the early development of ministries, only to limit that involvement once they become more institutionalized. Maria L. Boccia defines this pattern:

When leadership involved the charismatic choice by God of leaders through the gifting of the Holy Spirit, women are included. As time passes, leadership is

⁵⁰ Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downer Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 16-17.

⁵¹ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 16.

⁵² Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 16.

⁵³ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 16.

⁵⁴ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 17.

⁵⁵ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 19.

institutionalized, the secular patriarchal culture filters in to the Church, and women are excluded.⁵⁶

Grenz and Kjesbo delineate this pattern through three stages.⁵⁷ The first stage is the charismatic phase of revivals when women serve freely in roles of leadership. The second phase comes through second and third generations of leaders who prefer the respectability that is offered by credentials, ordination, and higher education. The third phase is the desire for full institutional respectability which comes at the high cost of marginalization of women.

Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi and Justo L. González in *To All Nations from All Nations: A History of the Christian Missionary Movement*, cooperatively produce a comprehensive study of the history of the missionary movement, defining mission as the activity of God in the world.⁵⁸ Most useful from this comprehensive study for this thesis, are the authors' notations on the role of women throughout the expansion of Christianity.

Cardoza-Orlandi and González suggest the misfortune concerning the lack of historical record concerning the role of women in the expansion of ancient Christianity. They suggest that during the early centuries, the church would have had more women than men, due in part to Christian teachings regarding gender encouraged a respect for women that was not found among society at large.⁵⁹ Cardoza-Orlandi and González caution that we need to be reminded of the importance of women in leadership roles, as we tend to forget how important they have been throughout the history of the expansion of Christianity.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 37. Cited Maria L. Boccia, "Hidden History of Women Leaders in the Church," *Journal of Biblical Equality*, September 1990, 58.

⁵⁷ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 38.

⁵⁸ Cardoza-Orlandi and González, *To All Nations from All Nations*, 5.

⁵⁹ Cardoza-Orlandi and González, *To All Nations from All Nations*, 46.

⁶⁰ Cardoza-Orlandi and González, *To All Nations from All Nations*, 50.

According to the authors, the contribution of women to the mission of the church during Medieval Missions is especially important. They note that mission is understood in terms of traveling to far away places which was not possible for most women in that day. However, as women fully lived out the gospel, and modeled the love of Christ, particularly among those who had been marginalized, they served an important role.⁶¹ Recent scholarship has uncovered the missionary work of women who worked alongside the Jesuits in Asia during the Early Modern Age and actively led ministries among Muslim and Hindu women who spoke healing and liberation from oppressive customs and practices.⁶²

While there are few notations of specific women recorded throughout history, Cardoza-Orlandi and González suggest that there were hundreds of women who could be used as proof that through their commitment to the gospel, they became outstanding participants of mission within their communities.⁶³

Scholarly Journal Articles

The first journal article comes from a familiar voice among our tradition as Dr. David Roebuck highlights the power and effect of the words we use. He does not suggest that the changes in recognizing women in levels of ministerial leadership were the result of language, rather that language reflected shifting values. He goes on to identify the use of language within the Church of God to ultimately curtail the participation of women in ministry, the exclusion of women from the highest ordination and most administrative

⁶¹ Cardoza-Orlandi and González, *To All Nations from All Nations*, 125.

⁶² Cardoza-Orlandi and González, *To All Nations from All Nations*, 172.

⁶³ Cardoza-Orlandi and González, *To All Nations from All Nations*, 126.

offices within the denomination. He further addresses the understanding that though there was a recognition of women as preachers, that recognition did not equate in equality with male preachers.⁶⁴ He suggests the ultimate exclusion from ordination in an effort to limit women to “comfortable parameters” within church ministry and leadership moving forward, resulted in the church moving forward without women on the front lines of ministry. It is interesting that this leadership missed the point that they were not limiting women, they were limiting the work of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵ Dr. Roebuck’s paper is of specific interest as it defines some of the historical foundations of the design intended by leadership within my own fellowship; it considers whether or not we make space for women to have liberty in recognized ministries and lead in higher levels of leadership within the context of the call to the Gospel of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit with His supernatural supply of resources. Ultimately, Dr. Roebuck defines the limitation of women relegated to lay ministries, auxiliaries, and ministry arm decorations with the resulting decline of pulpit ministries.

Two particular journals look with detail toward what has been referred to as the problem scriptures of Paul’s seemingly contradictory positions on women in ministry and leadership found in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and 1 Timothy chapter 2. Other articles come from recent emerging voices joining the scholarly choir. They offer perspectives that are different and may not have been considered.

⁶⁴ David Roebuck, “Loose the Women,” *Christian History* 58, (1998), accessed December 10, 2017, <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/issue/the-rise-of-pentecostalism>.

⁶⁵ There are those who determine that God cannot be limited. However, the psalmist declares that during the wilderness wanderings and possession of the promised land the Hebrews “limited the Holy One of Israel” with their complaining, disobedience, lack of vision and lack of faith (Psalms 78:41).

Cheryl Sanders examined the issue of recognizing women in upper levels of leadership among Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in North America.⁶⁶ She compares the practice of ordination of women at the beginning of the twentieth century with the current barriers to women's leadership and advancement among denominations. Sanders concludes that over the course of the twentieth century there has been a dramatic and substantial decline in women's ecclesial leadership among the Holiness and Pentecostal churches.⁶⁷ She suggests the way in which women are released for ministry and leadership becomes a measure of the spirituality of the church.⁶⁸

The complimentary presentation at that same conference was presented by Sheri R. Benvenuti, who pointed the question of where Pentecostal women in ministry and leadership go from this point forward. Benvenuti called for the leadership among the Pentecostal and Charismatic fellowships to recognize their need to return to their roots.⁶⁹ She challenged denominational leaders by presenting the declining percentages of women in ministry and legitimate church leadership roles within the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel from 67% in 1944, the year of the death of the female founder to 38% in 1993, noting that a great percentage of those women representing the 38% are wives of ordained pastors who do not function in leadership roles.⁷⁰ To complete her introductory challenge, Benvenuti quotes a seasoned Assemblies of God female evangelist, Mae Eleanore Frey: "God is no fool – I say it with reverence – Would He fill a woman with

⁶⁶ Cheryl J. Sanders "History of Women in the Pentecostal Moment," A paper presented at PCCNA National Conference, (October 1, 1996), 1.

⁶⁷ Sanders, "History of Women," 2.

⁶⁸ Sanders, "History of Women," 3.

⁶⁹ Sheri R. Benvenuti, "Pentecostal Women in Ministry: Where Do We Go From Here?" A paper presented at PCCNA National Conference, (October 1, 1996), 3.

⁷⁰ Benvenuti, "Pentecostal Women," 7.

the Holy Ghost, endow her with ability, give her a vision of souls and then tell her to shut her mouth?”⁷¹

While I have from time to time experienced the above suggested tension and disappointment of gender bias through silencing, restraint of liberty, and acceptance in ministerial leadership in the Church of God of Prophecy over the years, I have also hungered for the instruction available for rising to such a calling through the wisdom of the Word of God personally and through key individuals sent to speak life, power, and refinement along the journey of discovery to which He had called me. I am grateful for the biblical foundation provided in my search through the narratives and examples in His Word. Those examples enlarge understanding in how women were used of the Lord in ministry and leadership in the Old Testament. They continue to enlighten the study concerning the manner and ministry of Jesus with respect to women and how He recognized, ministered to, and empowered women to minister and lead. Further, the chronicles of the New Testament church encourage us to discover the influence and ministry of the Holy Spirit with respect to women who became leaders in those early years after the earthly ministry of Christ.

This leads us into the next chapter and a biblical and theological examination that provides a foundation and framework for women who are called to executive ministerial leadership.

⁷¹ Benvenuti, “Pentecostal Women,” 3, from “Selected Letters of Mae Eleanore Frey,” Compiled by Edith L. Blumhofer, *Pneuma*, 17/1 (Spring 1995), 78.

CHAPTER THREE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

*"Leave her alone . . . She has done a beautiful thing to me.
I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world,
what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."*
Mark 14:6, 9, NIV

Introduction

The role of women in Christian service with specific examination concerning ministry, ordination in ministry, and executive ministerial leadership within the church has produced controversial debates from the beginning of Christianity. Well into the twenty-first century women continue to question whether or not they are permitted to rise to the same positional status/functions as their male counterparts. This is an especially important issue to be addressed and to discover scriptural foundations that offer direction and understanding. This thesis addresses executive ministerial leadership within the church and will approach biblical evidence pertinent to this issue in two ways.

First, I will provide a general overview of women who are noted among those who served in leadership across the pages of the Bible. This overview will include Old and New Testament examples. Second, I will examine specific encounters of women who were called to more defined executive leadership and ministry capacities (positions and functions), even though it seemed beyond the cultural limitations of the day.

Women Ministering through the Old Testament

Biblical survey naturally begins with the Old Testament. Many historical accounts reveal a Patriarchal social order where males dominated public and private life. Was that

social order so structured as to exclude women from positions of leadership? What was a woman's place in Old Testament records? Does the Old Testament teach by precept and example that women should not be included in leadership among God's people? Did God call men *and* women to fulfill leadership roles?

In the Genesis creation account we find partnership and equality of the man and the woman as image-bearers of God, as both were created in His image. *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them* (Genesis 1:27 KJV). Relationship intimacy between God and the man and woman is also indicated as *God blessed them to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth* (Genesis 1:28 KJV). This blessing does not suggest that God gave more authority to the man or that God subjected woman to man in the creation narrative.¹

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him (Genesis 2:18 KJV). God provided a helper comparable to him (ezer kenegdo, Heb.), or one corresponding to him in kind. The noun used here does not suggest "helper" as in "assistant" or "servant," rather as "help, savior, rescuer, or protector."² It is used twenty times in the Old Testament, of which sixteen times it is used as a superordinate (e.g. God - Psalms 33:20; 1 Samuel 7:12), and it never used as a subordinate.³

¹ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 43.

² Payne, *Man and Woman*, 44.

³ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 44.

The male and the female became co-participants in the fall (Genesis 3:6; Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). While entrance of sin into the world resulted in the wife being subject to her husband [. . . *and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee* (Genesis 3:16 KJV)], both sinned and both would endure punishment and the expulsion from the garden.

However, the curse on the woman became culturally and lawfully exaggerated as time went on (rejoicing for the birth of a boy, silence for a girl; women set apart during menstruation, after childbirth, and segregated in the synagogue; the wife being listed among a man's possessions; etc.). Women were limited in their desire for religious study and seeking deeper relationship in God. The popular Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, who lived in first century Palestine, wrote: "Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman."⁴

However, even in light of noting the increasing bias evidenced against women of Old Testament times, we find instances of God using women in ministry and leadership.

Stagg notes that though the Old Testament is predominately male-oriented, "various public roles were open to women in Israel" including roles as "judges, prophetesses, queens, army commanders, and worship leaders."⁵

We are aware of and have read from many male prophets recorded in the Old Testament. However, God also records for our understanding his use of female prophets. The Hebrew and Greek dictionaries make no distinctions between the office and ministry of a male or female prophet beyond the gender form of the noun.

⁴ Rachel Keren, "Torah Study," *Jewish Women's Archive Encyclopedia*, accessed April 9, 2018, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/torah-study>.

⁵ Evelyn & Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 27.

A prophet is known to speak under inspiration, revealing the will and mind of God. The work of the prophet includes:

- Revealing the nature and attributes of God to men
- Making known to men the laws of God
- Calling the people back to obedience to God's laws
- Exhorting the people to sincerity in worship
- Warning them of divine judgment upon sin, both personal and national
- Foretelling future events which God had willed
- Foretelling the coming of the Messiah, the Savior
- Recording the history of God's dealings with men, and,
- Recording the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures.⁶

I was taught from an early age that the ministry gift of prophecy is one of authority and is second only to the apostle within authority in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:7-16, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31).

Included in the list of female prophets in the Old Testament is Miriam, one of the three siblings whom God chose to lead Israel out of Egypt and out of bondage. By her efforts, her brother Moses was rescued from the genocide of Hebrew babies in Egypt. God used her greatly in the Exodus and wilderness wanderings, but especially at the Red Sea to lead the people of Israel in a joyful celebration of deliverance from the Egyptian army (Exodus 15:20, 21). The psalmist includes Miriam with other female prophets who sang and led worship in victory over their enemies as those who proclaimed the Word of God (Psalms 68:11).

Miriam failed to escape what seems to be discrimination as she was targeted for discipline and held accountable for her words when she and Aaron rebuked Moses (Numbers 12). Though her brother Aaron was spared from the repercussions of the public displeasure of God, we note him pleading with Moses for forgiveness and relief for Miriam

⁶ Matthew Finley, "The God Who Speaks to Man: What Is A Prophet?" *Bible.org*, accessed April 9, 2018, <https://bible.org/seriespage/3-what-prophet>.

from the chastisement of leprosy. As Moses cried to the Lord for her healing, the discipline was determined for a duration of seven days, after which Miriam was restored to fellowship, and the Israelites moved on in the journey to a new encampment.

Also among the listed names of God-called prophetesses are Huldah (2 Kings 22:14; 2 Chronicles 34:22) and Deborah (Judges 4:4). When King Josiah anxiously anticipated hearing the prophetic word following the discovery of the Book of the Law in the temple, he seemingly did not seek for any of the leading male prophets of the day, such as Zephaniah (Zephaniah 1:1) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:2). Instead, he sent Hilkiah the priest and other officials to Huldah, who declared the word of the Lord. In response to Huldah's prophecy concerning the humbled king, Josiah led the people in an act of covenant renewal.⁷ Her instruction ignited one of the greatest revivals in the history of Israel (2 Kings 22:14-23:3; 2 Chronicles 34:29-35:19).⁸

There are other female prophets noted in Old Testament history, some named who were a hindrance to the plan of God (Noadiah) and some unnamed, and yet still used of God and mentioned in scripture (Nehemiah 6:14, Isaiah 8:3).

I especially appreciate the legacy of Deborah in that she served as both a prophet and a judge in Israel (Judges 4:4, 5). Deborah is perhaps the most prominent early female leader in Israel, and is perhaps the strongest example in the Old Testament of a woman serving in an executive role of ministry.⁹ The title of prophet would have been conferred upon Deborah in the belief that her actions were divinely inspired.¹⁰ Though Deborah is

⁷ Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downer Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 71.

⁸ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 56.

⁹ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 68.

¹⁰ Shimon Bakon, "Deborah: Judge, Prophetess and Poet." *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 34 no. 2 (April-June 2006): 118.

married, God positioned her and not her husband to serve as Israel's leader. She was so impressive as a military strategist that Barak refused to combat Sisera without her.¹¹

The literary features of Judges chapter four offer a prose narrative of Deborah and Barak which is most likely the product of many storytellers over a long period of time. "Its final form however, is a well-crafted story centered on Deborah's prophecies, Barak's reluctance, and Jael's deceptive heroism."¹² The grammar of the text introducing Deborah gives such significance to her leadership by departing from normal Hebrew word order (verb-subject) to place her name first in the introduction clause, "Deborah . . . was leading Israel at that time" (Judges 4:4).¹³ Hamlin notes Deborah's greatness was due in part to her sense of timing, her faith in God, and "her skill in strategic planning that demolished the Canaanite power."¹⁴ Somewhat in the form of Hebrew parallelism,¹⁵ the narrative prose of Judges 4:4-24 is followed by a complimentary poetry passage in chapter five, that though differing from the previous account, aids by providing clarity and detail. The "Song of Deborah," as it is known from Judges 5, is recognized as one of the most important and probably earliest renderings of Israel's faith.¹⁶

As prophet, Deborah acted as the mouthpiece for the word of God (Judges 4:6-7).¹⁷ As judge, Deborah functioned as Israel's highest legal tribunal (Deuteronomy 17:8-

¹¹ Aída Besançon Spencer, *Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1985), 103.

¹² Carolyn Pressler, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (Louisville: West John Knox Press, 2002), 154.

¹³ J. Gordon Harris, Cheryl A. Brown, and Michael S. Moore, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 171.

¹⁴ John E. Hamlin, *At Risk in the Promised Land* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) 83.

¹⁵ Frank E. Gabelein, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, v. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 403.

¹⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 123.

¹⁷ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 68.

13). She “held court . . . and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided” (Judges 4:5 NIV).¹⁸ She assumed the role of national judge in the same way as Moses had done earlier and made legal decisions in accordance with a prescribed code of law (Exodus 18:13).¹⁹ She served in her political function as she commanded Barak to assemble Israel’s army to resist the opposing enemy army (Judges 4:6) and directed the attack (Judges 4:14). Judges also served as spiritual leaders to foster worship and morality in Israel (Judges 2:19).²⁰ Deborah provided this leadership as she led the people in worship to God for the victory (Judges 5). From the very beginning of Deborah’s calling out of Barak to lead this battle, the assurance of victory was credited to Yahweh (Judges 4:7b).²¹

In this narrative, Deborah seems to have the gifting and anointing to initiate others to service. Her role as inspirational leader and prophetic witness is seen as she tells Barak to head up an army of 10,000 men from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun to defeat Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army. Barak declines unless Deborah is willing to go with him. She agrees to accompany him, but prophesies that Sisera will be delivered into the hands of a woman. Deborah is also the one who originally sent Barak and his warriors to their position to assemble and prepare for battle, determined the time of the battle, and ultimately defined the moment of God’s command to Barak to lead Israel down from the

¹⁸ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 69.

¹⁹ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 69.

²⁰ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 69.

²¹ Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Judges and Ruth* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), 85.

Mountain to claim the victory over the Canaanites.²² “Through Deborah, a woman could – and did – exercise authority over the entire community, including men.”²³

Some voices suggest that Deborah is referring to herself when she prophesies that the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hand of a woman (Judges 4:9). However, Deborah understood that she was just the vessel of the Lord and the victory over the enemy would not necessarily bring glory to the conquering general nor the prophetess, but only to the Lord.²⁴

According to Deborah’s prophecy, Jael becomes the heroine of the last scene in Israel’s victory over the Canaanites, perhaps intensifying Deborah’s prophetic character.²⁵ Jael’s words open (Judges 4:18) and conclude (Judges 4:22) the scene.²⁶ With her first words she approaches Sisera to invite him into her tent. Though the experienced warrior survives the battlefield, and though he is physically superior to Jael, he yields his life to the hand of the woman who offers milk and a blanket. With her last words, Jael welcomes Barak to witness the reality that while Barak continued to pursue Sisera, Sisera was already dead by her hand as Deborah had prophetically spoken.²⁷

²² Tammi J. Schneider, *Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry: Judges* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 71, 75.

²³ Grenz and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 70.

²⁴ Elie Assis, “The Hand of a Woman”: Deborah and Yael (Judges 4), *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, vol. 5 article 19 (2005), 4. From this point, Assis suggests that Jael and Rahab are used similarly in the Old Testament as a matter of choice in which to serve God and to help His People. Assis, “The Choice to Serve God and Assist His People: Rahab and Yael” *Biblica* 85 (2004), 84, 85; “From Moses to Joshua and from the Miraculous to the Ordinary: A Literary Analysis of the Conquest Narrative in the Book of Joshua” Jerusalem (2005), 68-74.

²⁵ Assis, “The Hand of a Woman,” 5.

²⁶ Assis, “The Hand of a Woman,” 2. From J. W. H. Bos, “Out of the Shadows: Genesis 38; Judges 4:17-22; Ruth 3,” *Semeia* 42 (1988), 53.

²⁷ Michael Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary HAFTAROT* (Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 99.

Matthews notes that the acts by Jael connect her to Deborah.²⁸ Wilcock suggests the two women have much in common as both are married, both are recognized in maternal language, both serve in unconventional and non-traditional roles, both are powerful and determined, both are used in God's purposes and have received God-given abilities and opportunities, both are central figures of this narrative, and what one woman initiates, the other completes.²⁹ In fact, Assis goes so far as to indicate that Jael became the arm and extension of Deborah to fulfill the prophecy.³⁰ Deborah's anointing, leadership, and vulnerability to the Lord are seen especially in the concluding moments of this account and are decisive for the battle's conclusion, whose success at the hand of a woman she had prophesied.³¹

While Deborah is a specific Old Testament woman who was called to a more defined executive leadership and ministry capacity, other women must be noted for their role of leadership in the salvific work of God among Israel. The record of the Old Testament provides insight on God's strategic positioning of women at critical places in critical moments. Abigail and Esther are two such women.

Abigail was an intelligent and beautiful woman married to a Calebite who was surly and mean in his dealings (1 Samuel 25:4). When her husband feigned ignorance concerning an agreement with David and his men and refused to pay wages owed, David prepared 400 fighting men with weapons to kill every man under the protection of their home (1 Samuel 25:10, 11, 33, 34).

²⁸ Victor H. Matthews, Bernard M. Levinson, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (London: T & T Clark International, 1998) 72.

²⁹ Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Judges* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 61, 62.

³⁰ Assis, "The Hand of a Woman," 9.

³¹ Gale A. Yee, "By the Hand of a Woman: The Metaphor of the Woman Warrior in Judges 4." *Semeia*, 61 (1993), 110.

As Abigail is informed of the impending doom, she moves with wisdom to put together reasonable payment for wages provided and rides toward David's approaching army. Without thought for her own safety, Abigail willingly accepts the consequences of her husband's action. However, with well-placed words and sincere concern for the future King of Israel, she pleads with David for the lives of her family and those who serve in her home (1 Samuel 25:28-31).

One of the most beautiful aspects of this narrative is that through Abigail, God demonstrates his intervention on behalf of the faithful wife of an evil husband. She provides safety and salvation for her entire household while preventing the future king of Israel from the senseless killing of his own people. And David recognizes that God sent Abigail to preserve his soul and reputation and to keep him from sinning (1 Samuel 25:32). The result of Nabal's malicious action brings him death, and God positions Abigail next to David as the wife of a future king.

God positioned Esther in the palace of the king in Shushan to save her people. She had to choose whether to conceal her connection with Mordecai and Israel and retain her place as the favorite of the king, or to trust that God had positioned her for such a time as was presented (Esther 4:14). Without her courageous leadership, an entire nation of Hebrews could have been destroyed. The narrative of Esther provides theological foundation and the challenge that women cannot be passive in a time of crisis when God has positioned them to make a difference and preserve life.

While God's use of women in the Old Testament may appear to be limited, He certainly documented for our understanding the calling and preparation of women in roles

of leadership – not only in family crises, or community ministries – but also, in what we might understand as executive leadership roles (positions and functions).

The New Testament – The Manner of Jesus

The survey of women serving in roles of executive leadership that begins in the narratives of the Old Testament provides the context of how to look at the New Testament. How did Jesus relate with women during his time on earth? Were women excluded from positions of leadership among those who traveled with and ministered alongside Jesus? Did Jesus call men *and* women to fulfill leadership roles during his earthly ministry?

The New Testament provides a glimpse into the manner in which Jesus related to, and allowed liberty to, women in ministry and leadership capacities. The four Gospels are almost exclusively our source for these encounters and we find recorded among the narratives concerns to characterize Jesus' manner and intention.³²

We will again consider a general overview of women who are noted among those who served in leadership during Jesus' ministry with an examination of a specific encounter where a woman was invited to a more defined executive leadership and ministry capacity.

Although no credible scholar holds that the Gospels are verbatim recordings of Jesus' words, what we do find recorded among the narratives are concerns to characterize His manner and intention.³³

Perhaps one of the greatest recognitions I have witnessed in my post graduate studies is the way in which Jesus interacted with women and provided accessibility for

³² Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 102.

³³ Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 102.

women. As I study the ministry of Jesus, I recognize that his ministry not only saw and stopped to minister to women, but He also released women from the culturally restrictive barriers of the day.

The account of a woman unique to Luke may best serve to represent what Jesus has done for woman. He saw a woman bent over and unable to stand up (Luke 13:10-17). He freed her from her infirmity, enabling her to stand up straight. Although this encounter has to do with a physical restoration, it may well point to something far more significant. In a real sense, the ministry of Jesus enabled women to stand with a proper sense of dignity, freedom, and worth since that very day. Jesus referred to the woman as a daughter of Abraham (Luke 13:16). Although there are records of *children* of Abraham, *seed* of Abraham, and *sons* of Abraham, this New Testament account shows Jesus addressing a *daughter* of Abraham, providing for her a relational significance among the people of Israel. Further, the healing He provided was offered on the Sabbath, perhaps giving her priority over the strict religious observances of the day. In recognizing her as a person and daughter, Jesus released this woman specifically, and perhaps women through many generations, back to a personal relationship with the Father.

The woman who touched Jesus' garment (Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34) is another example of release established for women, as well as Jesus' high sensitivity to the need of the individual.³⁴ In a crowd of people, she found courage to force her way to Christ to secretly touch His garment.³⁵ Plagued with a flow of blood for twelve years, she was unclean and threatened everyone in that crowd, yet, Jesus did not condemn her; He

³⁴ Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 110.

³⁵ C. S. Mann, *Mark*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1986), 285.

blessed her for her faith and, by so doing, released the woman from the gulf of the curse of the law (Galatians 3:1-14).

He used the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11) to recognize the guilt of the man's sin to be equally equated with the guilt of the woman's sin. Though this narrative does not seem to be original to John's text, it reflects the way in which Jesus is remembered in His ministry with respect to women. It has been suggested that Jesus understood that the frequent accusers who followed his ministry were not interested in the purpose of the law or the spiritual state of the woman, rather that she could be used as a pawn to entrap him.³⁶ By his sensitivity to the woman, Jesus took the attention of the crowd off of her and repositioned it on the intentions of the male accusers, aligning himself with the woman and challenging the accusers to examine their own participation in sin.

Jesus ministered to women. He allowed them access to touch Him and He ministered to their need. Perhaps one of the greatest illustrations of this vulnerability of inclusion is witnessed in His encounter with the Syrophoenician woman who approached Him with a need for the deliverance for her child (Mark 7:24-30; Matthew 15:21-28).

Jesus' response to the Gentile woman's request for her child has been suggested as the worst kind of chauvinism reflecting a Jewish term of abuse.³⁷ However, it seems that no one else receives the positive response from Jesus in the recognition of faith reflected by her own response. It is only her trust and confidence which compelled his

³⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 338.

³⁷ R. T. France, *Matthew*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985), 247.

response.³⁸ Jesus challenged his own disciples by the faith displayed by the woman and He granted her request ministering deliverance to her child.³⁹

Jesus allowed women a place of ministry represented by the Samaritan woman at the well which we will look at in more direct terms (John 4:1-42). Luke alone tells us that He included other women in His ministry as there were many women who ministered to Him and the disciples, even accompanying them on evangelistic journeys (Luke 8:1-3).⁴⁰

Luke's word for the ministering of these women is significant and is widely used in the New Testament. Its noun cognate, *diakonos*, may be rendered “minister” or “deacon.”⁴¹ Most prominent among these women is Mary Magdalene, who has been identified as one delivered from seven demons. Christ liberated and humanized people who otherwise were being enslaved or destroyed by forces within themselves. With Mary, Jesus not only liberated and helped her to health, but He dignified her as a full person and helped her discover her own ministry as she is found among those women who linger at the cross and visit the tomb on Resurrection morning.

The most significant affirmation of women in the New Testament may well be found in all four Gospels as women were the ones to find the tomb of Christ empty. According to Mark (16:1-8) and Luke (24:1-10), the announcement of Jesus' resurrection was first made to women. And, according to all four Gospels, women were commissioned to inform Peter and the other apostles of the most fundamental point of the Christian faith – that Jesus was not dead, but had risen and preceded them into Galilee.

³⁸ W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), 187.

³⁹ Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 114.

⁴⁰ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1981), 695.

⁴¹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 123.

Whereas other voices throughout history have found women unqualified and/or unauthorized to teach or lead ministries for anyone other than children or other women, the four Gospels record that it is the risen Christ who commissioned women to instruct men, including Peter and the other apostles, of the basic foundation of the Christian faith. It is interesting that a woman's calling and privilege to teach, preach, or effectively lead in more executive roles has been challenged by a church which, according to the Gospels, was first informed by women that Jesus is not among the dead but among the living.⁴²

I have always considered the possibility that Christ first appeared to the women because they were the faithful ones who had remained at the cross after the men fled *and* were also the first ones at the tomb in the morning considering to anoint his body. However, I believe it is possible that Christ appeared to the women and commissioned them to proclaim the good news of the Gospel to open the ministry to His handmaids upon whom He had promised to pour out His Spirit (Joel 2:28, 29). In any case, He allowed women a voice as those who would seem to be the first preachers of the Gospel.

It is difficult to move from the ministry of Jesus without recognizing his teaching and ministry to Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, as well as the recognition of her move in the prophetic ministry to Him. When the question arises as to the woman's place (kitchen or at the feet of a rabbi), Jesus defends her choice of the good part, and verifies that it will not be taken away from her (Luke 10:42).

The scene at the feast of Passover in the Gospel of John identifies Mary as the one disciple who was sensitive enough to respond to the anointing of the Holy Spirit to honor Christ by anointing Him with precious oil before death (John 12:1-3). The word of Jesus

⁴² Evelyn and Frank Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*, 145.

concerning Mary was one of defense and protection, “Leave her alone . . . It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial” (John 12:7 NIV). If the passage in Matthew 26:6-13 is a parallel of the same event, Jesus enhances the understanding of her obedience and identifies the anointing prophetically, declaring that this singular act of obedience will follow the gospel message throughout the whole world as a memorial to her (Matthew 26:13).⁴³

Jesus identified the worth of women and everyone else. I do not by this work suggest that Jesus was a “woman liberator;” rather, He was a *human* liberator. He was never bound by fleshly ties, ethnic identities, gender identities, cultic distinctions, etc. Every other principle and consideration for ministry and use in leadership are purely secondary and must never be the basis of measurement or criteria for ministry or leadership. Indeed, one lesson exemplified by the manner of Christ among his disciples – male and female – taught us that there is no time to devalue one another or question one another's right to listen to, follow after Him, or be used for ministerial leadership (Mark 14:6, 9; John 13:34, 35). We are called to work together as His Body, for His glory, and for the building of His Kingdom.

Before moving on into the examination of a specific narrative, I suppose I do need to recognize that the Twelve disciples who were called out are exclusively Jewish males. Apostleship is a distinct role and a primary one in the Church, and we are moved to ask, why men only?

⁴³ There are many differing discourses concerning the number of times Jesus was anointed and the purpose of each one including the passages in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:1-8, Luke 7:11, 36-48, and John 12:1-8. There is insufficient space and time to connect this thread other than this particular notation.

I recognize that there may be many considerations as to why Jesus would have excluded women among the twelve. However, it is interesting to note that Jesus also excluded Gentiles among the twelve. If we look to this exclusive example for allowance of executive leadership in ministry, everyone with the exception of a Jewish male would be excluded from the highest considerations of leadership and ministry. Indeed, no one who currently serves in executive leadership, at least in the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy, would be in leadership positions or functions. It is significant to note that Jesus did introduce far-reaching principles that would help a former rabbi to pen, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28 KJV).

The inclusion of many women in the traveling company of Jesus represents a decisive move in the formation of a new community. It would seem that Jesus' thrust was increasingly inclusive and not restrictive. Even in the early stages of His mission, women were becoming deeply involved at the power-center of His movement. This is evidenced in the examination of the following narrative.

Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well (John 4:1-42) is one of the most beloved stories in the Gospels. Many have turned to this well-crafted narrative as an example of the way in which Jesus interacted with women.

In this encounter, we observe Jesus crossing over a number of barriers to reach out to a sinful, Samaritan woman. Along the way, He breaks down barriers that had imprisoned the woman; barriers of culture, ethnicity, gender, brokenness, religion, sin, and witness. Moreover, by offering the gift of salvation and opportunity for witness to the

Samaritan woman, the Lord shows that there is hope and a place of ministry and leadership for all.⁴⁴

The narrative begins with Jesus and his disciples traveling from Judea to Galilee through Samaria. Approaching a city, they come upon Jacob's well. Tired from the journey, Jesus sits to rest about the time a woman came to draw water from the well.

The customary journey to the well in order to draw the daily provision of water was usually in the cool of the day and within the company of other women and/or servants.⁴⁵ The notation that this woman came alone and in the heat of the day suggests that she was not an ordinary woman, nor would she seem to be an accepted part of her community.⁴⁶ That she came to the well at all would identify her as poor, for the necessary daily drawing of water was no longer the work of women with social station.⁴⁷

The fact that she mistook Jesus to be a weary traveler perhaps offered the opportunity for Him to engage her in a conversation.⁴⁸ Although men, and especially Rabbis, avoided speaking to women in public, Jesus makes a request of the woman by asking for a drink of water.⁴⁹ A simple request regarding a necessity of life initiates a conversation between them.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Peter Scaer, "Jesus and the Woman at the Well: Where Mission Meets Worship" *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no.1, January 2003, 4

⁴⁵ F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 102.

⁴⁶ Paul Louis Metzger, *The Gospel of John: When Love Comes to Town* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 74.

⁴⁷ B. F. Wescott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 68.

⁴⁸ John Christopher Thomas, *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance* (Cleveland: CPT Press, 2010), 89.

⁴⁹ Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 129.

⁵⁰ Wescott makes the connection between the request for water in this passage with the utterance while on the cross of "I thirst" (19:28). While this motif does not connect directly with the purpose of this encounter, I did want to make mention of the reference, 68.

We are not told what reveals the ethnicity of Jesus, only that the woman inquires as to why a Jew would have any dealing with a Samaritan (John 4:9). Kindness was not expected between Jews and Samaritans. They shared a long history of disruption and distrust that began before the exile.

The woman's response (John 4:9) may have come in reference to unkindness on the part of the Jews toward the Samaritans. Her response may have somewhat regarded the Jews practice of not using vessels together with Samaritans and the understanding most definitely that a Jewish man would not share a drinking vessel with a Samaritan women.⁵¹ However, that is exactly what Jesus requests. He asks for a drink of water from her jar. Jesus showed equality in ministry in relation to the needs of males *and* females and in this example, broke the gender prohibitive traditions defined to them in public and private.⁵²

Jesus offers something superior to the water in Jacob's well; something superior to the legal religions of both Jew and Samaritan alike. Jesus offers living water with revealing revelation of his identity. His proclamation was that whoever drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that He could give would never thirst again, rather they would be a spring of living water welling up to eternal life (John 4:13, 14).

⁵¹ John Christopher Thomas, *The Spirit of the New Testament* (Leiden-Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2005), 139. The author includes a note within the narrative for the reader who might not know Jews do not associate with Samaritans.

⁵² Steven Jack Land, Rickie D. Moore, and John Christopher Thomas, *Passover, Pentecost and Parousia: Studies in Celebration of the Life and Ministry of R. Hollis Gause* (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2010), 324.

The woman has become aware of her need and cries out to request the gift of *this* water. She must have considered how wonderful it would be to not have to come and draw again from this well.

Jesus goes to the very heart and spiritual challenge of her longing – to the place where she would have been naturally vulnerable. The invitation is inclusive for her husband. She attempts to conceal her circumstances. Finally, in an amazingly truthful response, she confesses she has no husband (John 4:17). Jesus responds with the clarity of how much he knew about her, her desperation, and her unquenchable thirst to be loved. Her brokenness, her imperfection is on display – five husbands and a sixth relationship that was not a marriage.

Jesus knows her story, but He does not condemn her. He is *so* aware of her situation and her vulnerability, she suddenly perceives Him to be a prophet. If he is, perhaps he has the resolution concerning the religious question of worship. Where and how is the correct way in which to worship YHWH?

The response does not take long. Jesus declares that those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). God is a Spirit, free from all limitation of space and time. Jesus had come to introduce a new order and usher in a new and living dynamic of the Holy Spirit. The basic foundation was not precipitated by *where*, but rather *how* worship would go forth to God. It was through this dynamic that He would transform formalities and legalities into the work of the Spirit.

She moves from hiding behind religiosity to speaking of a distant Messiah figure who will come and fulfill the law. Jesus reveals that just as he removed the mountain of

religiosity, He also removes the distant future and operates in the present. Messiah is coming. And, I am the Messiah (v. 26).⁵³

It is particularly interesting that this is the first proclamation Jesus makes concerning Himself in the Gospel of John and it is proclaimed, not for the disciples nor the multitudes – rather for a single Samaritan woman in desperate need of a Savior. In this passage the ἐγώ εἰμι formula appears in the emphatic position; Jesus is thus equated with the “living water” as He has come full circle with this woman.⁵⁴ Johnson also identifies this “I am” statement as a response of identification, “I the one speaking to you am he [the Messiah]” (John 4:26).⁵⁵

By the end of the chapter, the Samaritan woman perceives and believes that Jesus is the Messiah (John 4:25, 26, 29). She not only believes, but she returns to the village and testifies of the one who has told her all things. Jesus removes her shame and she is transformed into the evangelistic witness to everyone (John 4:28-29), *the Messiah is here and He cares for me*. Maccini suggests that although she is hesitant and does not seem to comprehend fully the identity of Jesus as Messiah, she proclaims what she does know of Him and her testimony, as far as it goes, is true.⁵⁶ Compelled by love, she becomes one of the first evangelists recognized in the book of John. Because of her witness, an entire city comes to the place of encounter and ultimately believes based upon their own witness (John 4:42).

⁵³ Leon Morris, *Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1995), 241.

⁵⁴ Hollis Gause, “A Critical and Exegetical Study of John 16:13a,” Final Paper in Partial Fulfillment of New Testament, 497, 23.

⁵⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, Third Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 481.

⁵⁶ Robert Gordon Maccini, “A Reassessment of the Woman at the Well in John 4 in light of the Samaritan Context” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* v 53 (1994), 53.

The fact that she left her water jar at the well suggests that perhaps only she could witness to her city. In fact, the water Jesus offered could not be contained in the jar of Samaritan tradition. And there was immediate response as the city came to see for themselves the man who had so touched this woman. The witness of the woman began a two day revival seminar where many more believed; no longer just because of the woman's witness, but because they saw and heard for themselves. Their conclusion proclaims that He is the "Savior of the world" (only found in this passage and 1 John 4:14).⁵⁷

The Samaritan woman is one of many well-loved characters of the Gospels. Wright suggests that Paul did not include the women in his list of resurrection appearances of Jesus because women were not regarded as reliable witnesses (1Corinthians 15:5-8).⁵⁸ The Samaritan woman not only provides evidence of witness reliability, she exceeds the understanding and the action of Jesus' own disciples in this opportunity of mission/evangelism. Perhaps her strongest support to witness is Jesus' prayer for those who "believe in me through their word" (John 17:20). Indeed, many do come to believe through her word (John 4:41).⁵⁹ It would seem her anointing, witness, and ministry exceeds that of the disciples discernment and ministry in this particular encounter, as they return without telling anyone about Jesus and she becomes the evangelist who literally brings the entire city to Jesus.

⁵⁷ Paul J. Achtemeier and Joel B. Green, and Marianne Maye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 42.

⁵⁸ N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 142.

⁵⁹ Karl Barth, *Witness to the Word* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 51.

I am always interested in the response of the men within the ministry of Jesus, and specifically those men who minister and lead alongside Jesus. As they return it is noted that they marveled that Jesus was speaking with a woman (John 4:27). That always sounds like they were a little embarrassed when He moved outside of the parameters of their comfort. It is interesting that the disciples were busying themselves in the search for food, but when they returned, Jesus reminded them that His inner-spiritual source of sustenance came in obeying His Father's will and completing that which the Father had sent Him to *do* and to *finish* (John 4:34). He draws their attention to the immediate results produced by the witness of the woman to the word of God. As they looked up toward the city, the disciples saw the fields – Christ saw the harvest.

That the Samaritan woman functions as a missionary/evangelist, one may look to the missionary language Jesus uses as He instructs His male disciples upon their return. Brown notes one of the most important uses of the verb ἀπέστειλα within the Gospel of John (4:38).⁶⁰ Jesus has just encouraged the disciples concerning the fields being ripe for harvest – and they look up to see an entire city of Samaritans coming to Jesus as a result of the woman's witness.

When the disciples returned and saw Jesus speaking to the woman, they were surprised. Even today we are surprised to see the extent in which Jesus calls women and men to ministry and leadership within the Christian community.⁶¹ The disciples dared not ask Him what he would want with a woman (John 4:27). Brown suggests that may well be a question whose time has come in the church of Jesus Christ.⁶²

⁶⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 188.

⁶¹ Brown, *Community of the Beloved*, 198.

⁶² Brown, *Community of the Beloved*, 198.

While not quite in the place of the Samaritan woman, my hope for the fellowship of believers is for the exciting revelation of Jesus, who truly is the “Savior of the World.” We need that revelation to speak life and infuse His living water to sustain, strengthen, and refresh vessels attempting to serve well with joy and anointing. My desire is beyond the repetitious controversies concerning the legalities and religiosities concerning women in executive leadership capacities. I long to participate with other believers in the excited witness of transformational power to individuals and the cities as opportunity to see the lost saved, the wounded healed, the marginalized restored, and the daughters of God freely released to productive ministry, leadership, and supernatural anointing. Jesus still reveals Himself. He still changes lives. He still calls and empowers for service.

And Jesus came and said to them, “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:18-20 NRSV).

These last words of Jesus recorded in the book of Matthew are spoken with all authority and commission. It is a call to ministry and leadership, specifically encouraging evangelism and discipleship. He concluded this call with the promise of His presence.

The New Testament Church

As we look to the New Testament Church, we discover the fullness of Paul’s declaration, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28 KJV).

One of the most powerful illustrations of women called to ministry and ministerial leadership is the recognition of women numbered among the male disciples in the Upper Room outpouring in Acts chapter 2 (Acts 1:14, 15; 2:1, 4). Peter indicated this provision of empowering for service, ministry, and leadership and that it was for all whom God calls (Acts 2:23, 38, 39). Women, alongside of men, were filled with the Spirit, spoke in tongues, and were empowered for ministry and leadership. Daughters, as well as sons, would prophesy (Joel 2:28).

Paul's letters and greetings to the churches included numbers of women who served with him in ministry and in significant leadership capacities. Junia is recognized as a woman *among* (a fixed position) the apostles (Romans 16:7).⁶³ So strong is the language concerning her, some early texts changed her name to the masculine form supposing this role could not have been filled by a woman.⁶⁴

Among New Testament female prophets, we note the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8-9).

Priscilla is recognized as a teacher (Acts 18:26) and in principle text as a pastor (1 Corinthians 16:19) of a church that met in her home. Paul speaks complimentary toward her concerning her ministry and her faithfulness in leadership.⁶⁵ Further, between Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, Priscilla was the one most recognized by Paul in a more primary role of leadership as Paul most predominately recognized her first (Romans

⁶³ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 65.

⁶⁴ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 65.

⁶⁵ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 64.

16:3). This placement would be anti-cultural and indicative that her leadership was the stronger of the two.⁶⁶

Phoebe served as the female deacon of the church in Cenchrea (Romans 16:1). Phoebe's leadership role is evident as Paul recognized her as a προστάτις (leader, chief, one who stands before, etc.), indicating Paul's esteem for her in the highest trust.⁶⁷ The epistle to Titus recognizes the old women at Crete as teachers of the good (Titus 2:3). The word "old" is from *presbutis* or "female elder."⁶⁸

Many other women were in Paul's trust; time and space do not permit me to recognize all of the active and extraordinary female leadership who ministered and led with him. Yet, in the very epistles that bring recognition to these women we discover seemingly contradictory positions on women in ministry and leadership. In one passage, Paul assumes that women pray and prophesy in church (1 Corinthians 11:4, 5), recognizing free access for women to do ministry along with men at the highest level.⁶⁹ However, 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 seems to restrict women from doing ministry at all.

As passages are interpreted in light of context, perhaps 1 Corinthians 14 would provide a temporary application to a specific probe. Grant Osborne insists that the author's meaning must be determined before the application of his statement is employed to this age.⁷⁰ Was the problem a present condition that existed in the church in Corinth?

⁶⁶ This name placement recognizing the lead is supported by the principle text of Acts 13. When the chapter opens we find Barnabas and Saul (v 2). By name placement, Barnabas was recognized as the lead minister. However, before the chapter ends, there is a name change (from Saul to Paul) and a position change (Paul and Barnabas, v 43). By Paul's name placement, Priscilla would have been recognized as the more gifted and capable minister and leaders of the two in the ministry team.

⁶⁷ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 65.

⁶⁸ Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 107.

⁶⁹ Gilbert Bilezikian, "Created Male & Female: no limits to ministry Roles in the Church, No Limits to Ministry: Two Views," *Discipleship Journal*, (September/October 1993), 73.

⁷⁰ Grant R. Osborne, "Hermeneutics and Women in the Church" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Volume 20, No 4, (December 1977), 339.

Was Paul dealing with an absolute and universal principle or was he dealing with a cultural setting?

There are three injunctions to silence in 1 Corinthians 14:28-35, two which include men and only one which singles out women specifically. There is a command to silence the tongues speaker if an interpreter is not present (1 Corinthians 14:28). There is direction to silence a prophet if a revelation is made to another prophet (1 Corinthians 14:30). There is a command for the women to keep silent in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34). The word used for the speech of the woman in verse 34, however, does not indicate a formal lecture, exhortation, or teaching, rather simply idle talk or chatter.⁷¹ As the Apostle makes clear in verse 40, the issue at hand within this passage is decency and order. Most references I researched, as well as several interviews over a period of years, confirm that Paul seems to be correcting a specific problem of disorder and confusion in the church at Corinth.⁷² The undisciplined manner in which the believers were behaving in service needed to be corrected.⁷³ Even with the correction, Paul refers the women to the godly headship of their husbands, and not to the one in authority at the local church.

Another problem text in the Pauline Epistles is found in 1 Timothy 2:11, 12. This particular passage seems to deal directly with women usurping authority. It becomes apparent that Paul could clearly not be forbidding women to teach in this passage, for if this was so strongly and absolutely enforced, how could Priscilla have taught so notable a student as Apollos (Acts 18:26) with Paul's commendation? Further, this passage is

⁷¹ Payne, *Man and Woman*, 221.

⁷² Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul & His Letters* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 276.

⁷³ Achtemeier, Green, and Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament*, 346, 347. The suggestion concerning correction from this perspective is that Paul is correcting the men in Corinth who have acted as though they alone should speak in service. Paul's rebuke suggests that the restrictive attitude of the men will not be tolerated.

written in the present indicative tense which indicates that Paul was speaking about a present condition that existed in the church. There is strong support to suggest that, again, Paul was writing to correct a specific problem. Spiros Zodhiates observes:

“Certain persons had arisen in the congregation and attained a place of prominence because of their ability to teach in an interesting and convincing manner. What they were teaching, however, was a different doctrine . . . not beneficial for the true faith . . . [of] a Christian lifestyle.”⁷⁴

Some of these teachers had to be women, for his instruction is very pointed. It has been suggested these teachers were those who had come into the church and were using their influence in such a way as to gain an advantage and persuade men to their thinking; their message was one of pure soul in a not so pure body.⁷⁵

While Paul is careful for the traditions of his day, he writes with concern that nothing must hinder the Gospel. It is apparent that Paul identified with the people he was with. He became all things to all people, that by some means some might be saved (1 Corinthians 9:22). Paul would have recognized the cultural restrictions for women in that day, as well as the impression a woman publicly involved in ministry would have had on that society. His accommodation would be to prevent any hindrance to the Gospel. However, to take these texts to be absolute and universal would be to compare the text in 1 John 27 to indicate that none of us ever need be taught by a man again.

One reason I highlight these two challenges among Paul’s writings is the insistence and enforcement of them upon women in training for ministry and/or executive leadership often by the most prominent male leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy for most of our history. It was not until 1996 that our church re-examined

⁷⁴ Spiros Zodhiates, “Women in Church Leadership,” *Pulpit Helps*, vol. 8 No 11 (August 1983), 6.

⁷⁵ Spencer, *Beyond the Curse*, 105.

Paul's seemingly restrictive language. In our tradition, women were encouraged to teach Sunday school, youth, children, or other women; however, there were very restrictive opportunities for women to rise to the kind of significant leadership for which Paul recognizes Phoebe.

It was within this context that I assumed the office of Women's Ministries at the International Offices in 1993 in an executive leadership role. My predecessor had served in this office for twenty-eight years. Perhaps due to her undeniable ministry anointing and leadership, she was allowed some privilege toward opening prospects for women in developing ministry and leadership opportunities. I was half her age when I assumed the office and was not entirely prepared for the task the Lord had initiated in His positioning.

While Paul may have encouraged women to move within the culturally-accepted roles for women of his day, it seemed in my spirit that we had reached a day wherein the restrictions of such godly female ministers hindered the progressive forward move of the Gospel. I sensed that I would answer before the Lord for the responsibility He had allowed me. I realized that cultural and biased restrictions could no longer be allowed to hinder women from fulfilling the will of God and move of His Spirit in this day. I knew I could not affect such a massive turn in my fellowship, but I also understood that I had to be obedient to the move of the Holy Spirit and that meant becoming vulnerable to the opinions and expectations of others.

Conclusion

We have looked at the past and recognized perhaps some of the restrictions that history placed upon women in ministry and ministerial leadership, while at the same time

noting the liberty of the Spirit. But, what of today? What is the Spirit's call to godly women today?

I suppose the Lord must answer for each of us the question as to where we fit in to His directive and positioning; however, we must never allow cultural and biased restrictions to keep us from fulfilling the will of God and move of His Spirit in us. A complex and diverse illumination has been unveiled as a result of the benefit of witnessing the unlimited and extravagant outpouring and work of the Holy Spirit through faithful women throughout the world and throughout the ages.

The delineation of the limitations exacted by organized and often patristic ministry authorities did not prevent the call, anointing, and purpose of God from being lived out and fulfilled. Rather, the witness of overcoming tenacity instructs of Holy Spirit strength and appreciation within the contextual diversity. This lovely diversity focuses on the unique concentration for the higher calling to the glory and purpose of the Lord.

Stephenson makes a unique observation that informs my understanding and appreciation for “voices from places once considered marginal in Christian theology:”

“The Holy Spirit holds together disparate (dissimilar, contrasting, distinct unrelated) things without compromising the individual identity and integrity, in order to inform the spiritual imagination that is attuned (in sync) to the many contextual voices in our pluralistic world so as not to silence the one voice by conflating it to another.”⁷⁶

Julie Ma contends that if we acknowledge the call and empowerment of God in women’s roles of ministry, like teaching, preaching, leadership, mission and/or

⁷⁶ Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 102.

administration, women should be recognized and encouraged without limitations.⁷⁷ This directive re-imagines how women of the New Testament Church became coworkers with God as they exercised the courage to submit to the overshadowing power of the Holy Spirit and were able to grasp what could not be seen in the natural. Their perceived weakness turned into a powerful, prophetic recovery of ministry and leadership in both church and community. In order to help women discover and assume their true identity in Christ Jesus, we must look to the transforming power and work of the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁷ Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, Ed., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Baguio City: Regnum Books International, 2005), 116.

CHAPTER FOUR PROJECT DESIGN

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you,
plans to give you hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11, NIV*

Introduction

Chapter four will provide a test evaluation on how to determine and measure the challenge of providing room for female inclusive leadership at the executive ministerial level at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy. as well as the possibilities in the states, regions, and nations who recognize and appoint such positional leadership.

As noted throughout this thesis, the context of study is predominately specific to the International Offices of The Church of God of Prophecy. As proposed in the first chapter, a recognition emerged through the years concerning the diminishing role of women in executive leadership roles, as women gradually lost authority in the church and were precluded from most high offices and places of responsibility at the International Offices.¹ Additionally substantiated in chapter one, restructurings of ministries at the International Offices over the years transitioned most of these roles from executive leadership to secondary roles of leadership under two male executive ministry directors who currently serve under the appointment of our General Overseer. These two challenges seem to substantially limit the opportunity to provide room for female

¹ Studies highlighted in chapter one by Dr. Raymond Pruitt and Dr. Hector Ortiz.

inclusive leadership at the executive ministerial level at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy.

With these challenges quantified, perhaps the trial includes developing an awareness of the limitations we may have inadvertently imposed that resulted in the direct diminishing of women in executive leadership, as well as searching for solutions that will affect an effort to provide room for female inclusive executive leadership.

Choice of Survey Instrument

Due to the tasking of charting time periods, global leadership changes, office structural adjustments, and geographical/cultural considerations, it seemed best to conduct a series of surveys that would provide input without immediate prejudice among those who have served and currently serve in executive considered leadership positions taking into consideration the global realm (aspect) of ministry service within the Church of God of Prophecy.

Choosing the questionnaire survey process as the instrument to obtain information from those who have served in executive leadership and those who have been served by those in executive leadership, allowed for a more refined measurement of quantitative and qualitative examination. Dr. Bryan Auday's course on Research Methodology suggested that questionnaires were efficient, economical, and capable of collecting a large amount of data in a relatively brief time. Additionally, questionnaires provide confidentiality and allow for more transparent responses even when working through sensitive or controversial issues.

While using the open-ended questions concept produced a greater challenge for measuring, analyzing, and comparing responses, it also gave more liberty to evaluate personal perceptions concerning the issue by allowing additional reflection.

The majority of those providing input into this thesis project are either currently positioned in executive/administrative leadership or have served in the past in a comparable role of leadership for the Church of God of Prophecy. They also all have some level of computer skills that assist them in connection, communication, and commitment to caring for those under their leadership. For that reason, and for the purpose of this project, I used Survey Monkey as the electronic instrument for delivery and response.

Participants for the Survey

In order to obtain a better representation of the views with regard to our global ministry in 135 nations, I prepared three surveys that would examine the issue from a controlled leadership perspective as well as a diverse gender and cultural perspective.

The first questionnaire was designed to include all the women who currently serve in leadership at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy and/or those who served previously in executive leadership positions in the past. This included twelve women who were still accessible to provide data. One was aged and ill at the time of the request and was unable to complete the questionnaire. Of the remaining eleven women, nine completed the survey.

The second measure for gathering input consisted of a separate questionnaire of five questions that were sent to a select group of our current state, regional, and national

presbyters who serve as presiding overseers/bishops in their states, regions, and nations, and who along with our General Overseer, seven General Presbyters, and International Offices Executive Ministry Directors and Trans-locals comprise the International Presbytery of the Church of God of Prophecy. This questionnaire was sent to forty-four leaders; twenty-two who serve as leaders in the international platform and twenty-two who serve in regional and state leadership within the United States. Nine of the twenty-two international leaders and sixteen of the twenty-two state/regional leaders completed the survey.

The third and final survey was directed to the current General Overseer and General Presbyters who comprise the highest level of inspirational leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy globally. The questionnaire was sent to the eight leaders. Six of the leaders responded with four of them completing the survey.

The first survey was distinctly designed for females. All of those completing the second and third surveys were male. *(For the initial email invitation to participate, the invitation letter to participants and reminder invitation contained in the Survey Monkey format, and the original three survey questionnaires, please see Appendixes A through N on pages 131-147).*

Questionnaire to Participants for the Women in Executive Leadership Survey

As noted above, the survey consisted of nine initial questions (with a few follow-up questions) to twelve women focused on what each woman has experienced as she has served in ministry and/or leadership at the executive level at the International Offices for the Church of God of Prophecy. The constituency for this survey reflects all of the

women alive who served in this capacity. Perhaps this number alone reflects the need for this kind of evaluation.

As noted, of the twelve women included in the survey, nine completed and returned it which represents a 75% completion rate. Questions 1-5 and 6b, 8, and 9 were not chartable as they resulted in a variety of open ended questions.

Question 1 asked about what the participant had been taught in spiritual formation concerning women fulfilling the role of executive ministerial leadership.

Of the nine women who responded, one doesn't remember being taught anything, two were taught that women were not considered for executive leadership, three were taught that the Lord uses men and women in leadership and it is the Lord who prompts those appointments, one was taught to assume responsibility for actions and decisions, one was taught when you might not be accepted as a leader, you must work harder, and one did not respond.

Question 2 asked about the obstacles they had experienced in fulfilling their appointment to leadership.

Two of the participants had not encountered obstacles. The other participants noted obstacles including age, culture, political leanings, perceived inferiority, devalued in the role due to gender, lack of credentialing, patronization, recognizing the years of a male-dominated domain, the lack of consideration for promotion when the male counterpart was promoted, the necessity to prove ability, a sense of ownership by male supervisor, challenge of discerning the

difference between the function of the office and the call to leadership from the Holy Spirit.

Question 3 concerned fears in fulfilling the role of executive leadership. Some of the responses included:

Competency, acceptance, not being heard, not being able to express with adequate/acceptable language in meetings, the fear of pleasing man, getting caught up in political games, the fear of the future, being too intense, making silly mistakes that would jeopardize those I work with, being required to complete work that was later presented as someone else's work, not being compensated equally for the work being accomplished, being threatened with dismissal, fear of being transparent, not making the right decisions, missing the voice and direction of God for myself, the ministry, my family, my marriage, making sure my priorities were correct, and becoming so consumed with the job that I'd fail in my role for my family.

Question 4 questioned the influence of scripture in defining the acceptance or restraint of women serving in executive leadership in ministry.

Not one participant could reference a scripture that would restrain a woman from fulfilling an executive leadership role in ministry. Every participant suggested a scripture that provides confidence in fulfilling that same role. Those references include: Isaiah 43:13, Matthew 28:7, 9,10, Acts 2:17, Galatians 3:18, 27-29, Ephesians 4:11, Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 1:9, and one participant suggested all scripture used within context.

Question 5 dealt with specific roles of executive leadership. Participants noted roles of leadership in which they had been discouraged from fulfilling and roles in which they had been encouraged to fulfill.

Three participants had not experienced discouragement from fulfilling leadership roles. Others noted roles they had been discouraged from fulfilling including pastoral ministry, preaching, administration, and active leadership. One was told that all women working at International Offices were secretaries, regardless of the position held. Most of the participants also experienced encouragement to fulfill executive leadership roles including leadership formation, and encouragement to follow God's leading, anointing, and personal giftedness, including opportunities to participate in major ministry events. One participant did not recall being discouraged or encouraged.

Question 6 contained one of the points in this particular survey that could be partially charted as the first question asked if the participant was called and gifted by God for executive leadership and given opportunity to use that gifting within the context of appointment. The second portion of that question ask for a brief revelation of that gifting and the expression through the role.

Of the participants, nine responded in the affirmative and one responded that her role in executive leadership was in relation to working with her husband and spoke of preference to a behind-the-scenes ministry of study, research, discussion, and writing polity.



Figure 1: Women Survey - Question 6a

Participants defined revelation and expression of the giftings as being called and affirmed by God and others including pastors and other godly leaders, giftings continue to be evident in work and ministry strengths throughout life, that leadership roles requested to be fulfilled are consistent with gifting, passion, and ability to accomplish the work with excellence, further providing ability to lead and invest in others, and support ministry opportunities that continue to be available.

Question 7 asked the participants if they have had opportunities to use their giftings within the context of their executive leadership.

Nine participants responded yes and gave examples. One participant reflected upon her response to question 6 which has been indicated on the chart as not applicable (N/A).

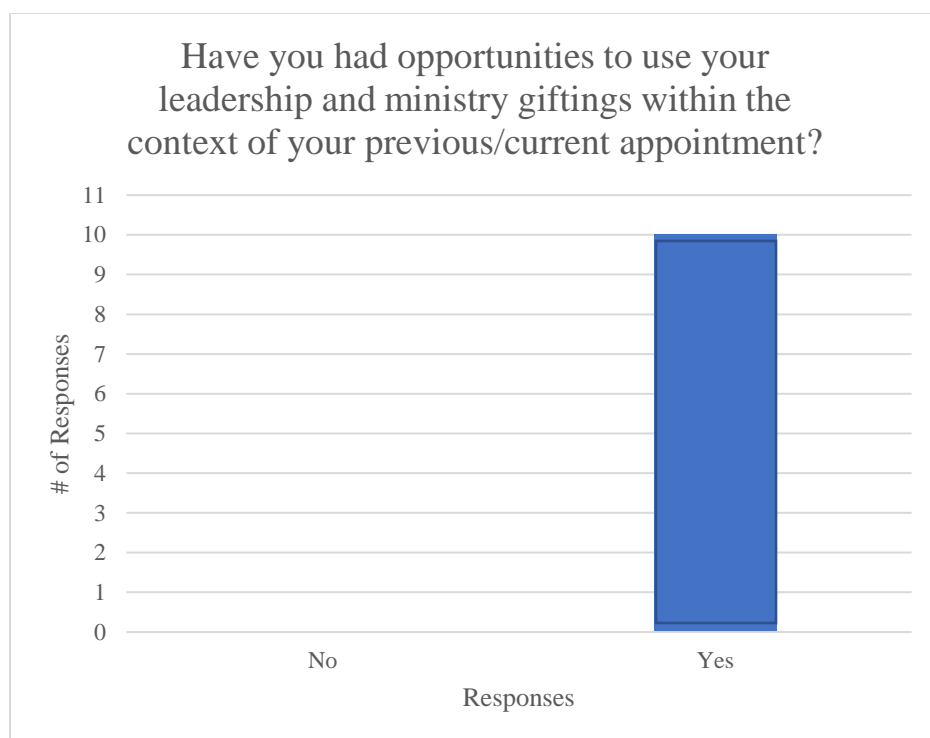


Figure 2: Women Survey - Question 7

Question 8 defined the influence of female role models on the participants.

Every participant noted with affirmation the influence of a role model at some point in their life including mothers, spiritual mothers, biblical examples and women with whom they have had interaction in mentoring relationships.

Question 9 offered the opportunity to note limitations placed on women rising to executive leadership roles that had not been considered by this author. The responses included a number of exceptions used against women being considered for leadership roles.

Participants noted prejudices including ethnicity, culture, age, education, language, social status, gender bias, not what you know but who you know or to whom you are related, men using scripture to keep women from appointed

executive leadership, limiting the office of bishop to males, the bias of those who make the appointment, and finally, the mind sets and prejudice of other women who are not gifted for such leadership capacity.

Questionnaire to Participants for the International Presbyters' Survey

The second measure for gathering input as noted above consisted of a questionnaire including five questions presented to a select group of our current state, regional, and national presbyters who serve as presiding overseers/bishops in their states, regions, and nations. In an attempt to be inclusive in other opportunities that might provide for this level of leadership, consideration was given to a cross section of US territories and international culture, traditions and experiences to include the views that may vary from one region to the next.

Also, as noted above, this questionnaire was sent to forty-four leaders with proportionate representation from the international platform and regional and state leadership within the United States. Nine of the twenty-two international leaders responded representing a 41% completion rate. Sixteen of the twenty-two state/regional leaders completed the survey representing a 73% completion rate. Overall, 57% of those requested to participate in this evaluation completed the survey. I do not have the information from one of the respondents who said he completed the survey, but it did not come through the Survey Monkey process.

Three respondents did not completely understand the questionnaire, as they expressed concern as to the ramifications of my work concerning the office of bishop more than once. It was such a concern, I sent a reminder to each of the participants to

remind them that the theme of this thesis did not in any way deal with the consideration of women in reference to the office of bishop. As you may determine, this is an especially sensitive issue within the Church of God of Prophecy. I will briefly look at this issue again in chapter five.

The one evaluation I did not consider when preparing this questionnaire concerns the age, the tenure, the culture, and the region of oversight of the state/regional/national presiding bishop/overseer when examining their responses and how these defined perspectives might influence their response. I realized that I could distinct each of them from my personal interaction and relationships with them and their information housed here in the international offices, however, that consideration was not covered for the integrity of the original response so I did not add that evaluation to this thesis. It is a lesson for future work.

Question 1 requests the awareness of the participant concerning the presence or absence of women currently serving in executive leadership in the International Offices.

Two of the respondents were unaware of the presence or absence of women currently serving in executive leadership. Twenty of the respondents were aware in differing degrees of understanding concerning the current lack of female executive leadership at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy.

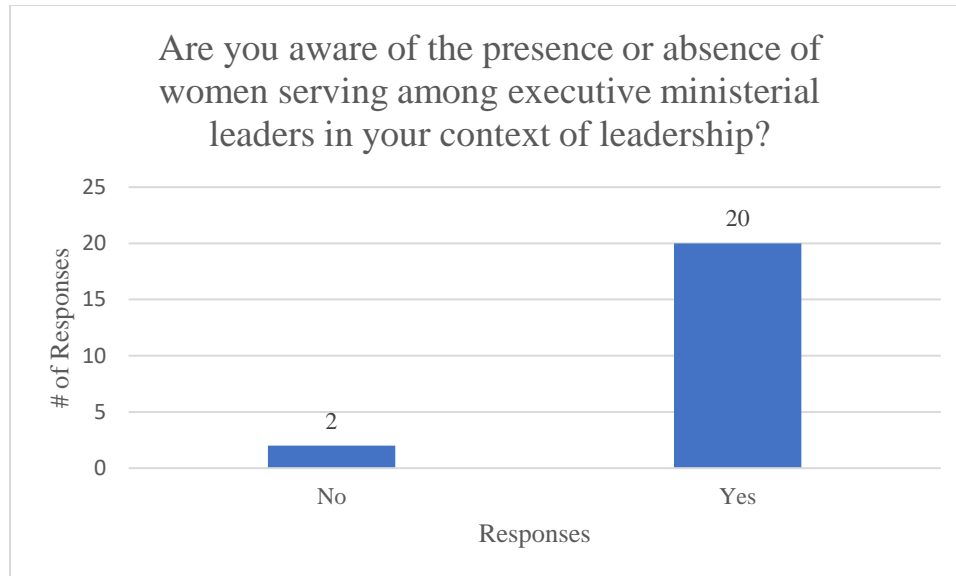


Figure 3: IP Survey – Question 1

Follow-up responses to question 1 included a general awareness of the resulting effect of restructuring in limiting the role of women in executive leadership roles at the International Offices. Additionally, cultural restrictions were noted in settings that limit the leadership roles that women can fill as well as the polity of the Church of God of Prophecy concerning the limitation that only men can serve as bishops and in apostolic roles. There were also responses that noted awareness that more can be done to recognize the anointing of women who are capable to serve in executive leadership roles, including appointing women to serve on regional boards and committees within their own geographical areas of oversight and responsibility, to reflect encouragement for women to pursue credentialing and to encourage women to desire and prepare themselves for executive leadership roles. Finally, there were two responses that noted concern for

using gender-ratio as a measuring point, mandating an equity response rather than being aware of the Spirit-driven criteria Jesus used in selecting and empowering leadership among His ministry.

Question 2 inquires as to what biblical principles might reveal concerning women serving in executive ministerial leadership. This question is the one question that is similar in all three questionnaires. The open-ended responses are varied and seem to include observations in four general areas.

The first area of response is that scripture is not specific to gender serving in leadership roles, rather offers a general sense of where people can be used of the Lord. Two responses noted their understanding as scripture having little to specifically indicate the use of women or men serving in ministerial leadership, rather, it offers examples which seem more contextual than universal. A second area of response indicated that scripture has no restrictions at all for women serving in executive leadership with examples of women abounding in the Old and New Testaments. The third area of response noted the question about women serving in ordained roles as bishop and/or serving in a presbyterial role suggested that Scripture is clear that women should not serve in those roles as bishops are to be male. Included in this area of response it is noted that while women are included in certain roles of leadership, Jesus did not choose women to be apostles. This response used the Galatians 3 proof-text for the inclusion of women in salvific context – while suggesting differing roles for leadership. The fourth general area of response to this question suggested that both men and women are equally blessed and given the authority to exercise given talents and gifts, citing

scriptural inclusion on Deaconesses, women Judges, and women prophets. Two responses included the polity of the process of licensure within the Church of God of Prophecy historically focused on male individuals holding the license of a Bishop for leadership while sometimes ignoring women gifted by God with exceptional administrative skills, perhaps due to the absence of genuine biblical research and application of biblical understanding.

Question 3 asks the question as to whether women can be gifted to serve in executive leadership.

Most of the responses were emphatically positive. There was one exception that noted the phrase “*ministerial leadership conjoined*” leads to a conclusion that is not supported in scripture as the New Testament does not teach that women are to serve in an apostolic role. One other responded affirmatively with the exception of a woman serving in the role of a bishop. On the other end of the spectrum, one participant suggested that though our current polity does not allow for female Bishops, he recognizes some females who are in our fellowship who seem to be more gifted in executive ministerial leadership than some men currently serving in those roles.

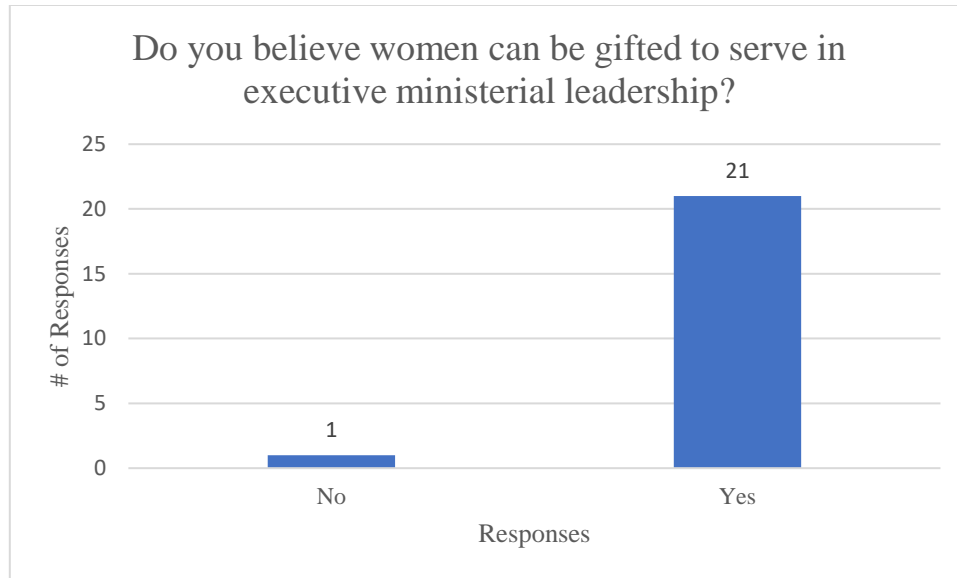


Figure 4: IP Survey – Question 3

Question 4 distinguishes between gifting and empowerment for women serving in executive leadership roles.

With the one exception response concerning women serving in the office of Bishop, every other response concluded that God’s empowering women for executive leadership is self-evident by observation of examples cited in the Old and New Testaments. One response noted the exclusion or diminishing of the role in which women serve in leadership seriously reduces the pool of possible leaders during processes of selection and/or appointment. Another response suggested that women serve as some of the most exceptional leaders as they excelled in their gifting as well as their ability to discern issues that were otherwise hidden.

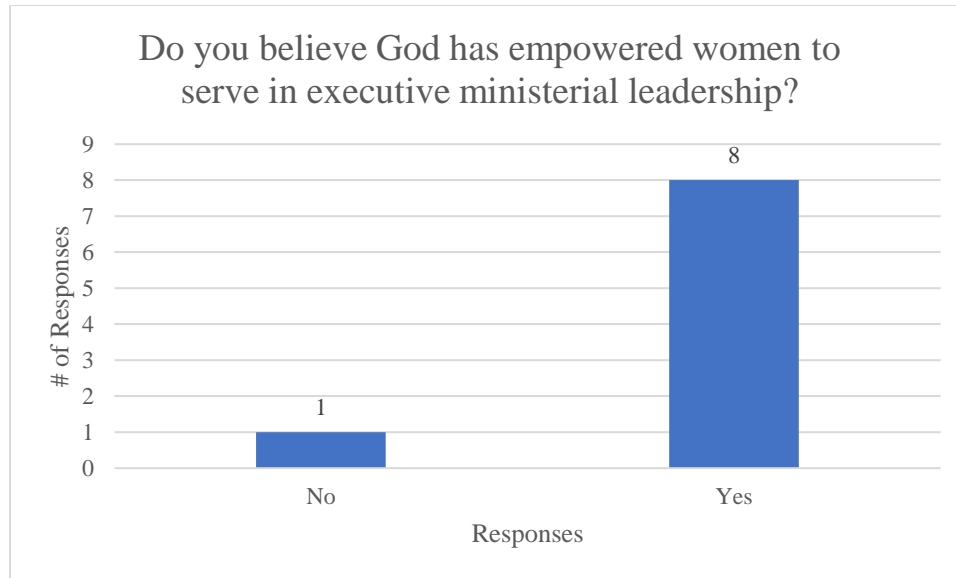


Figure 5: IP Survey – Question 4

Question 5 seeks to discover whether those who lead ministries in administrative regions globally have provided opportunities for gifted and anointed female leaders to rise with equity alongside gifted and anointed male leaders for executive leadership roles.

Fifteen of the total participants (60%) responded that as administrative bishops/overseers they are currently appointing specifically gifted women to leading administrative roles in their regions including, state/regional/national committees and boards, administrative leading roles on the state/regional/national team, state/regional/national executive ministry directors, state/regional/national core value based ministry initiatives, lead moderators for state/regional/national conferences, state/regional/national ministerial review boards, and one noted a woman as serving among the national trustees of the church in that nation and as a member of the national executive team. Six of the total participants (27%) responded that they are currently including specifically gifted and anointed women in comparable ministerial leadership roles such as district/regional/and

state overseers under their authority as a presbyter. One participant noted that in his experience with this specific appointment; he has found the women as effective as the men who also serve in this role. Five (23%) of the participants included women among their lead pastors in their areas of supervision. Three of the five added that they live in areas of the world where women as lead pastors might be perceived as anticultural, and yet, these women are flourishing in the role. Nine of the participants (42%) specifically noted an intentional mentoring/training program in place to encourage women to desire such executive opportunities of leadership and to pursue education and credentialing as they continue to mature and serve. Two participants (9%) noted that they do not appoint women to apostolic roles. At least twelve of the participants (55%), while noting the challenges of gender discrimination, suggested that they appoint leadership by recognizing calling, anointing, gifting, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit, irrespective of gender. However, several of those added that they are intentional to be equitable in appointing leadership.

Questionnaire to Participants for the General Overseer/General Presbyters' Survey

The third and final survey was directed to the current General Overseer and General Presbyters who comprise the highest level of inspirational leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy globally. I had originally intended to interview these brethren; however, their schedules require them to travel extensively which made timing very difficult. Additionally, the interview does not provide the level of confidentiality desired, nor insure the responses with an equal measure of integrity as does an

anonymous survey. The questionnaire was sent to the eight leaders and included three questions. Six of the leaders initially responded with four of them completing the survey. Again, one of these participants wrote in completion of the survey, however, we never received it through Survey Monkey.

Question 1 asked for the ratio of women to men serving in executive ministerial leadership roles within the context of their administrative responsibility.

Three participants responded that they have no women serving in executive ministerial leadership roles. One noted his work as exclusively connected with presiding bishops/overseers and our polity does not provide for women in this capacity. One participant recognized one woman who serves with 100 men in his area of responsibility.

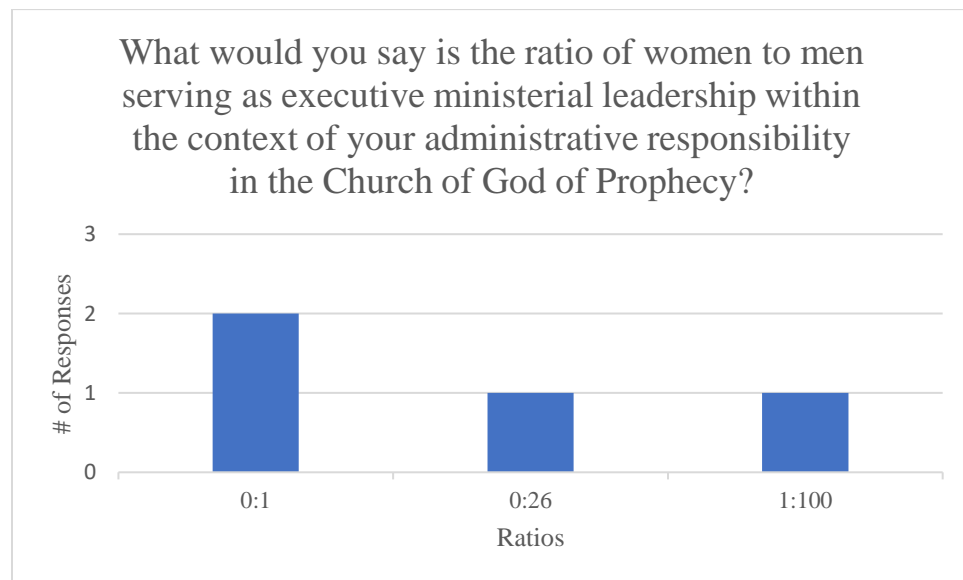


Figure 6: GP Survey – Question 1

Question 2 concerned their beliefs regarding scriptural or other prohibitions that limit women serving in executive ministerial roles, again within their context of administrative responsibility.

One participant deemed that scripture itself did not limit women serving in executive ministerial roles within his context. Another suggested that it may be the way in which we “read” and interpret scripture. Three of the participants suggest that our historical polity provides for exclusivity for men to serve as bishops. One participant confirmed our polity as the plainest reading of scripture in that it limits the role of a bishop to men and bishops have typically held executive leadership positions.

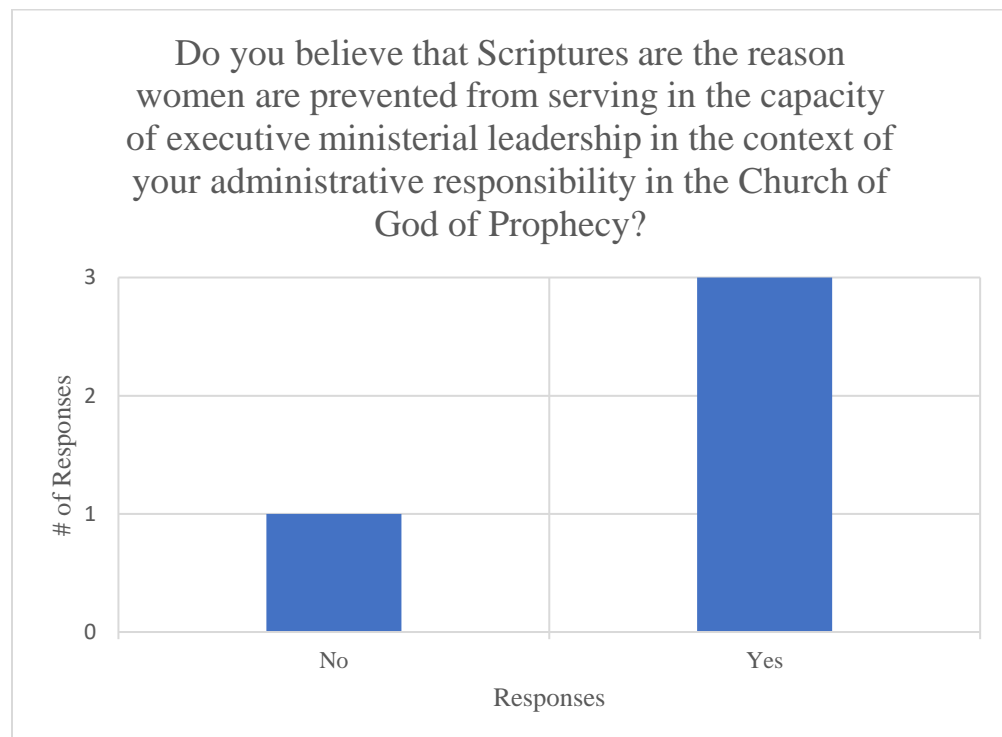


Figure 7: GP Survey – Question 2

Question 3 concerns supporting a higher ratio of women to be included in a more active role in executive ministerial leadership within the context of oversight provided to those serving as administrative bishops/overseers.

All four participants supported encouraging women to prepare for and engage in all levels of leadership. One participant supposed my intention for the question to be one of leading to a woman serving in the capacity of state/regional/national overseer. His support would align with an Assembly ruling that would give approval for such leadership. Another participant suggested that limitations to the office of bishop were not the only hindrance for women serving in executive ministerial leadership, observing that the need is great to actively seek more women in ministry all together, increasing visibility, opportunity, and recognition. One participant recorded their only strategy at this time was a desire to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit.

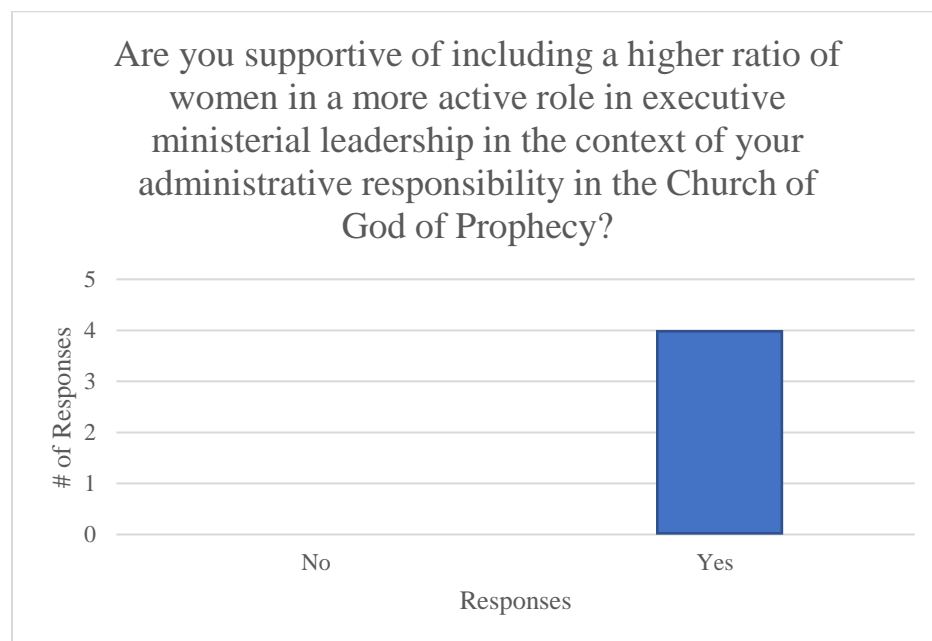


Figure 8: GP Survey – Question 3

Conclusion

This concludes the thesis project.

In the next chapter I will summarize the process, note the challenges experienced, and suggest recommendations in ways that possibly could have improved the project response and outcome.

I expect to find support for my thesis proposal as a result of the project response. I also expect to find challenges in the project response to my thesis research provided in chapters two and chapter three, due to diverse exegetical hermeneutics and elucidations. Finally, I intend to explore the impact of two small adjustments in the project design that may have provided for a stronger defense of the thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In chapter five, I will provide an overview relating to the work produced in this thesis concerning the challenge of women in leadership roles in the Church of God of Prophecy with specificity pertaining to appointment and positioning in executive leadership functions. I will revisit and summarize some of the early history particular to the Church of God of Prophecy in line with patterns shaped by the eschatological urgency brought on by the emerging Pentecostal movement, the effects of the mid-century drive toward institutionalism, and the effects of the restructuring of our international presence and executive leadership roles nearing the end of the previous century and into the twenty-first century.

Further, I will briefly recapitulate the literature used to impact the early Pentecostal effort, the historical witness of the Church of God of Prophecy, as well as the more recent scholarly voices who have offered a different perspective of study from biblical texts concerning women serving in more defined roles of executive leadership. Additionally, I will reaffirm scriptural precepts examined concerning the Christian service of women with respect to ministry and executive ministerial leadership witnessed within the people of God in the Old Testament and the beginnings of the Early Church in the New Testament.

Finally, I will evaluate the structure and effectiveness of the project design, how successfully the project provided response to the project proposal and the possible flaws that had impact on the response, and determine the success of support with reference to

the original proposal. As suggested above, this chapter will bring conclusion to the research provided in the previous chapters as well as acknowledge future challenges to all leadership serving in executive appointments moving forward that may not be addressed specifically by this thesis.

Thesis Overview

As noted early in the first chapter, the Church of God of Prophecy can trace its beginnings to over a century ago as one of the emerging early Pentecostal denominations. From the very first assembling of leadership early in our history, minutes and historical records have provided witness that women stood beside men in predominate positions of ministry and leadership.

Revisiting the intersection between the growing denomination with the great revival at Azusa Street in early 1908 brings attention to the influence on our founder/leader by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit experienced during this time and the emerging eschatological urgency concerning the soon return of Christ, the end time, and the end of harvesting efforts. In part, we have connected Tomlinson's writings to increasingly refer to men *and* women undertaking great things for God.

In view of the comparatively equal urgency experienced on the day of Pentecost, and the narrative notations that both male and female believers were tarrying in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14), we easily confirm the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as empowerment for service (Acts 1:8). As men and women were both empowered, both men and women would now be targeted by the Holy Spirit, called upon, and positioned for service as every voice would be used to lead the lost to salvation.

However, evidence has been offered concerning the tension that rose initiating a limitation of ordination and licensure for women in more official positions of authority. As the church moved forward through the century, and Pentecostals leaned more toward organization and institutionalism, these same women were increasingly prohibited access to the higher executive positional leadership. Van Der Massa reminds us that executive ministerial leadership roles became increasingly dominated by male Pentecostal leadership.¹

I remember being taught as a very young girl that our fellowship had few restrictions and greater liberty for women who were in ministry and ministerial leadership. That uniqueness in executive ministerial leadership gradually shifted as inaccessibility to, or restriction from, ordination and led to a loss of authority in the church for women as they were precluded from high offices and places of responsibility.

In the early 1990's I remember a strategic reconciliatory assembling with a sister denomination where efforts were made to bring healing and restoration from a disruptive split in the fellowship 70 years prior. I was a part of the proceedings throughout the week in my role serving among the executive ministerial leadership internationally for the Church of God of Prophecy. Near the end of the week, we gathered for one of the last celebration services. Seated in the congregation, we were waiting for the two executive committees to emerge and take their places on stage. As the hosts of this particular service, the executive committee from our sister denomination appeared first. I watched as six mature white men moved to the chairs prepared for them. Our executive committee

¹ Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, Ed., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, Revised and expanded edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002, 2003), 1203.

followed. I noted the diversity immediately in our executive committee as two white men, two black man, one Hispanic man and a woman moved to their corresponding places. I don't believe our efforts during that time could have been defined by tokenism, rather, perhaps our best efforts to be intentional allowed for the dynamic of diversity as leadership was encouraged to rise among us globally.

While I have noted the move to institutionalism that affected that dynamic, the other change that specifically impacted the role of women serving among the executive leadership came late in the 20th century with a reformation of global inspirational leadership and at least two resulting restructurings of international offices ministry directors.

The reformation of global inspirational leadership would theoretically enlarge the dynamic of diversity as it enlarged the office of General Overseer from one-man leadership to a team dynamic of *leader among leaders* with seven General Presbyters serving beside the General Overseer. The seven General Presbyters would (again, theoretically) rise and serve globally with specificity in regional oversight of Africa, Asia (including Australia and the Pacific Ocean Islands), the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean Islands, Central America and Spanish-speaking Caribbean Islands, Europe (including the CIS nations of Eastern Europe and the Middle East), North America, and South America. The resulting effect upon the structure of international offices led first to a reduction of five executive ministerial leaders thus impacting the number of women serving in executive ministerial leadership roles at the International Offices. The ministries that remained after the first restructuring were folded in under the five executive leaders and their positions were relegated to ministry directors/coordinators. A few years later,

another restructuring transitioned most of the former executive ministerial leadership roles to secondary roles of leadership under two male executive ministry directors who currently serve under the appointment of our General Overseer. Over a period of ten years, executive ministerial leadership roles transitioned from thirty-nine appointed positional leaders to seventeen, then to five, then to two who currently serve in those roles. The resulting challenges seem to substantially limit the opportunity to provide room for diversity overall while completely removing the possibility for female inclusive leadership at the executive ministerial level at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy.

As noted before, with the challenges quantified, perhaps one recommendation at this point includes developing an awareness of the limitations we may have inadvertently imposed that resulted in the direct reduction of women being considered for executive leadership, as well as searching for solutions that will affect an effort to provide room for female inclusive executive leadership. I will speak further to this proposal in my concluding statement with reference to the recent unanimous appointment of a woman to serve as a general secretary of the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination who now has historically selected the first woman to serve on their Executive Leadership Team.²

Reviewing the printed literature of the early Pentecostal movement publications, one readily notices the number of articles included that have been submitted from women; women leading in ministry in the global spectrum as missionaries as well as women leading as pastors and in ministries within the local church. As suggested earlier

² Mark Forrester, “Donna Barrett Elected General Secretary,” *Assemblies of God*, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://news.ag.org/news/donna-barrett-elected-general-secretary>.

in the thesis, these publications reported news and updates from the nations being reached for the Gospel, testimonies from the ongoing Pentecostal revival, and sermons/articles most often by the ministry leaders of the particular movement. As previously justified, many of these resources aid students and researchers to observe the inner workings and foundations of the ministries from the past that might otherwise have been lost.

Additionally, these publications provide an understanding of the many supernatural ministries led by women who rose to executive ministerial leadership. One of the first appointed positions made by A. J. Tomlinson in the Church of God of Prophecy was a woman who previously was highlighted for her ministry in a revival in Virginia that was continuing past the advertised dates due to the success in reaching souls. Perhaps of greatest value for me in preparing to write such a thesis were the historical narratives that tell the story of the early Pentecostal movement, their organization, polity, and the foundation in which they prepared. The publications were most helpful in discerning the way and tracing the foundation in which women originally rose to ministerial leadership status and were appointed to executive leadership roles within the Church of God of Prophecy.

Creating a balance to the early Pentecostal movement, many of the more current writers contribute a supporting voice from a different season through journal articles and scholarly texts. We find support for including women in executive ministerial leadership roles, as the literary research contained in this work provides specific examination concerning women in ministry and executive-type ministerial leadership positioning that further aids discovery of biblical support through academic work of theologians in their examination of Scripture made useful in chapter three. These resources also provided a

fuller understanding of the issues women encounter when they are called to ministry in general and ministerial leadership specifically within the context of executive appointment as examined in this work.

While each literary resource added support and balance for this thesis, perhaps there were three that were most helpful in establishing foundational sustenance. C. T. Davidson's work as church historian was vital for recording the historical support for women who were appointed in executive leadership roles as national administrators alongside the men who were appointed in those roles. One of the disappointing elements in seeking such evidence of women being used in executive ministerial leadership is the historical tendency to overlook the important investment of women. Many historical recorders chose not to include significant roles of leadership women provided. I'm thankful Davidson did not ignore it.

Aída Spencer's work in *Beyond the Curse: Women Called To Ministry*, was the standard for providing biblical insight to the continuing conversation concerning the gifts women add as ministerial leaders in taking the Gospel message throughout the world. As previously noted, her observations concerning examples of women in executive levels of authority found in the New Testament were of particular interest for chapter three of this work. Her noted concerns with being a careful and accurate scholar who adds to the discussion and perspective was a productive lesson and model to consider.

In their work, *Women in the World of Jesus*, Frank and Evelyn Stagg provided principle and relative research within the contexts of how things were for women living in the world before Jesus came, the way in which Jesus saw and related to women, and the role of women within the context of the Early Church. While their work also noted

examples of God's use and positioning of women in ministerial leadership throughout the Old and New Testaments, their emphasis of the secure centrality of the empty tomb narratives found in all four Gospels gave significant place to women at the very foundation of Christian faith and witness, and provided incomparable directive to new impetus given to the role of women in leadership moving forward.

The new impetus continues to be an especially important issue to be addressed and to discern scriptural foundations that offer direction and understanding. Nearly twenty-one centuries after Christ came as Savior and liberator of humanity, women continue to question whether or not they will be permitted to rise to the same positional status/functions as their male counterparts. Chapter three of this thesis addressed approached biblical evidence pertinent to this issue in two ways.

First, a general overview was provided of women who were noted among men who served in prominent leadership roles across the pages of the Bible, with examples from both the Old and New Testaments. Second, an encounter of women who were called to more defined executive leadership and ministry capacities (positions and functions), was provided from each Testament, even though the positions and functions in which they served seemed beyond the cultural limitations of the day.

Though historical accounts in scripture reveal a patriarchal social order where males dominated public and private life, God did not exclude women from defined positions of leadership. Scripture provides proof that God did indeed call and anoint men *and* women to fulfill ministerial leadership roles as examined in this thesis in the Old Testament, during the earthly ministry of Jesus, and in the early New Testament church dynamic.

Perhaps one of the greatest points of personal gratitude witnessed in my post graduate studies is the way in which Jesus interacted with women and provided accessibility for women in His earthly ministry. As noted previously, one of the most powerful illustrations of women called to ministry and ministerial leadership is the recognition of women numbered among the male disciples in the Upper Room outpouring recorded in Acts (Acts 1:14, 15; 2:1, 4).

Peter indicated this provision of empowering for service, ministry, and leadership and that it was for all whom God calls (Acts 2:23, 38, 39). Women, alongside of men, were filled with the Spirit, spoke in tongues, and were empowered for ministry and leadership. Daughters, as well as sons, would prophesy. (Joel 2:28)³

Paul's letters and greetings to the churches confirm many of the women who did indeed serve beside him in ministry and in significant leadership capacities in the Early Church.

May the limitations exacted by organized and often patristic ministry authorities never prevent the call, anointing, and purpose of God from being lived out and fulfilled. May we as a church body and a Christian fellowship never allow cultural and biased restrictions to overrun the liberty given in scripture that might prevent anyone personally or any distinctive group from fulfilling the will and call of God and the move of His Spirit in us. Rather, may we celebrate the witness and appreciation of the Holy Spirit working within contextual diversity and focus on this lovely diversity for the higher calling to the glory and purpose of the Lord.

The intent of the project design was to provide perspective and assistance in bringing awareness to the issue, as well as formulating strategies to recognize and

³ Noted in Chapter 3, page 76.

position women in the future with respect to their calling and giftings concerning executive ministerial leadership.

The statements and questions included in the project design were very important to formulate a platform and evaluate our current understanding concerning a woman's role in executive ministerial leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy. It was also important to determine if what we would glean from responses of our current global leadership could offer progress in affecting change to our recent patterns and limitations.

As noted, my expectations of the questionnaire directed toward women who were currently serving, or who previously served in executive ministerial leadership could provide insight and practical suggestions for the challenges we face moving forward. My expectations from the questionnaire directed toward the targeted International Presbyters currently serving in leadership was first to discern an awareness concerning this issue and secondly, determining strategies toward putting in place a process of affecting change. I anticipated the responses from the third questionnaire prepared for our General Presbyters might provide a framework of what is already being put into place in the more progressive areas of our global network that might effectively work churchwide.

As suggested in chapter four, the tasking of charting time periods, global leadership changes, office structural adjustments, and geographical/cultural considerations, with each possibly contributing to a declining space for women to serve in executive ministerial leadership roles, was challenging. It seemed wise to conduct a series of surveys that might provide input without immediate prejudice among those who have served and currently serve in executive level leadership positions.

As previously noted, I constructed questionnaires for feedback at three levels of executive ministerial leadership, with each participant either currently positioned in executive/administrative leadership or having served in the past in a comparable role of leadership for the Church of God of Prophecy. With regard to our global diversity, I included a spectrum of diverse perspectives through gender, ethnic, and cultural considerations.

One challenge concerning the questionnaire designed to include all the women who currently serve in secondary roles of leadership at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy and/or those who served previously in executive leadership positions in the past, was the limitation of women available. We only have five living women who served under direct appointment of the General Overseer in executive leadership roles, four of which only served for six years or less in that particular capacity. Only one woman alive at the time of this effort served in excess of 25 years in this capacity as executive ministerial director of women's ministries. For several years, she was the only woman at the executive table in staff meetings. Her perspective is deeply missed. Her exclusion to the process could not be avoided due to her late years and current illness. I believe her perspective would have added value to this portion of the project. As noted, of the twelve women included in the survey, nine completed and returned it which represents a 75% completion rate.

A flaw in the project questionnaire emerged most evidently in the second measure for gathering input, a separate questionnaire of five questions that was sent to a select group of our current state, regional, and national presbyters who serve as presiding overseers/bishops in their states, regions, and nations. As noted previously, these men

with others comprise the International Presbytery of the Church of God of Prophecy. In the title of my thesis, we agreed for this project to use the position title *executive leadership* to represent the office in which to examine inclusion for female leadership. This terminology represents perhaps a more secular frame of reference for ministers in the Church of God of Prophecy and is less familiar in defining the task for which I was requesting response. Unfortunately, the language led at least three participants at this level of leadership to question specifically what role/office was being examined as permissible for women to hold. There was more than slight concern that I might be including the office of bishop for consideration as a point for this thesis. You will notice in the information I attached to the original survey invitation for participation, and in the reminder for participants concerning the time frame remaining for response, I qualified the ethics of my research concerning the specificity of the role of women *under appointment*, language more familiar to us, as well as attempted to disarm the suspicion concerning an attempt to qualify women for the office of bishop (see Appendices E, F, and K on pages 134, 136, 142).

In our current understanding and doctrinal publications in the Church of God of Prophecy, women in our fellowship cannot be considered for the office of bishop. Since the pre-assembly presbytery meeting in 2014 (narrative shared in chapter one), this issue has risen as a sensitive challenge for our fellowship, perhaps more sensitive within North America as represented by the responses received. There are those among our leadership hierarchy who are especially tender from the changes we allowed in order to give women who serve in prominent leadership roles in the International Offices a voice during the International Presbytery meetings. While I did attempt to specifically identify the office

for which I was requesting observation and input, I unintentionally increased tension concerning this issue with at least three participants, as they specifically took issue in their responses. I regret the lack of specific clarity concerning this language. It was never my intent to increase concern with respect to this sensitivity.

Another consideration for concern was the low percentage of responses from this particular group. I desired to reflect the diversity of global leadership in the Church of God of Prophecy and the high level of indigenous leaders who serve globally. With this purpose, I requested input from twenty-two international leaders and twenty-two state/regional leaders from North America. Responses included nine of the twenty-two prospective participants among international leaders (41%) and sixteen responses of the twenty-two state/regional leaders (73%) who completed the survey (for an overall 57%). I had anticipated a better percentage of responses, so I am compelled to at least consider why almost half of those invited to provide input did not respond. Perhaps the two noted challenges provide at least some clarity.

One final constraint to this portion of the project design was the inability to include our leadership who serve at this level who do not speak English. The constraint of access to good translation resources impacted the results of the responses. It has been my experience over the past few years to take note of the leadership choices among a specific group of our international presbyters, specifically our Hispanic leaders serving in southwest North America and in the nations of South America. While many of our leaders at this level of leadership do not include women in any executive ministerial leadership consideration under their office authority, a number of our Hispanic administrative state/regional/national presiding bishops are recognizing administrative and leadership

capabilities in women serving within their respective areas of supervision and are appointing them in administrative/executive/supervisory leadership roles previously only held by men. I am also aware of a limited number of these instances in Asia.

The third and final survey was directed to our current General Overseer and the General Presbyters who comprise the highest level of inspirational leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy globally. The questionnaire was sent to the eight leaders. Six of the leaders responded (75%) with four of them completing the survey (50%). At least one of the eight completed the survey, however, we never received the response and he was unable to complete and submit it again.

One question was included in each of the three groups surveyed and attempted to quantify the influence of scripture in defining the acceptance or restraint of women serving in executive ministerial leadership.

Not one participant among the women could reference a scripture that suggested any restraint as to a woman being limited from fulfilling an executive leadership role in ministry. However, every participant in this test group suggested a scripture that provides confidence in fulfilling that same role. Some of those references include: Isaiah 43:13, Matthew 28:7, 9,10, Acts 2:17, Galatians 3:18, 27-29, Ephesians 4:11, Philippians 4:13, 2 Timothy 1:9, and one participant suggested that all scripture used within context would encourage women to fulfill any role of ministry in which they were called and anointed.

Among the second test group questioned, there were a variety of responses as noted in chapter four. Generally, the first area of responses indicated that scripture is not specific to gender serving in leadership roles, rather offers a general sense of positional authority in which people can be used of the Lord. Two responses within that area of

response suggested scripture had little to specifically indicate either gender serving in ministerial leadership, rather, offering examples which seem more contextual than universal. A second area of response indicated that scripture has no restrictions at all for women serving in executive leadership with examples of women abounding in the Old and New Testaments. A third area of response noted the question about women serving in ordained roles as bishop and/or serving in a presbyterial role suggested that scripture is clear that women should not serve in those roles as bishops are to be male (Please note the specific responses in chapter four concerning supplemental response.). The fourth general area of response to this question suggested that both men and women are equally blessed and given the authority to exercise given talents and gifts, citing scriptural inclusion on deaconesses, women judges, and women prophets. I think it prudent to repeat two specific responses here from findings in chapter four indicating their recognition concerning the polity of the process of licensure within the Church of God of Prophecy historically focused on male individuals holding the license of a Bishop for leadership while sometimes ignoring women gifted by God with exceptional administrative skills, perhaps due to the absence of genuine biblical research and application of biblical understanding.

The third test group responded generally with similarly phrased expressions as the second group. One participant deemed that scripture itself did not limit women serving in executive ministerial roles within his context. Another suggested that the way in which we have read and interpreted scripture may have limited the role of women in executive ministerial leadership roles. Three of the participants suggested that our historical polity provides for exclusivity for men to serve as bishops. One participant confirmed our polity

as the plainest *reading* of scripture in that it limits the role of a bishop to men and bishops have typically held executive leadership positions.

Another parallel question was included in each of the first two groups surveyed to determine discernment concerning God's calling and gifting, approving women to serve in executive ministerial leadership appointments.

Of the participants in the first group, nine women responded in the affirmative that God had called and gifted them to serve in executive ministerial leadership and one responded that her role in executive leadership was in relation to working with her husband and spoke of preference to a behind-the-scenes ministry of study, research, discussion, and writing polity.

This test group was asked a secondary means of measurement as to how God revealed calling and gifting to each participant. Participants defined revelation and expression of the giftings as receiving their calling and affirmation by God and others including pastors and other godly leaders. Some noted that God's giftings were evident in their work and ministry strengths throughout life, and that the leadership roles required as a result of appointment were consistent with gifting, passion, and ability to accomplish the work with excellence, further providing the capability to lead and invest in others, as well as supporting ministry opportunities that continue to be available.

Most of the responses from the second test group were emphatically positive. There was one exception that noted the phrase "*ministerial leadership* conjoined" leads to a conclusion that is not supported in scripture as the New Testament does not teach that women are to serve in an apostolic role. One other responded affirmatively with the exception of a woman serving in the role of a bishop. On the other end of the spectrum,

one participant suggested that though our current polity does not allow for a woman to serve in the role of Bishop, he recognizes some women in our fellowship who seem to be more gifted in executive ministerial leadership than some men currently serving in those roles.

The second test group was also asked a secondary question distinguishing between recognizing *gifting* and discerning *empowerment* for women serving in executive leadership roles.

With the one exceptional response concerning women serving in the office of Bishop, every other response concluded that God's empowering women for executive leadership is self-evident by observation of examples cited in the Old and New Testaments. One response noted the obvious effect of exclusion or diminishing of the role in which women may serve in leadership does indeed seriously reduce the pool of possible leaders during processes of selection and/or appointment. Another response suggested that women who serve in these roles serve as some of the most exceptional leaders excelling in their gifting as well as their ability to discern issues that were otherwise hidden.

One final comparable question was included in both the international and general inspirational leadership test groups. The question was asked not only to discover whether those who lead ministries in administrative regions globally have provided opportunities for gifted and anointed female leaders to rise with equity alongside gifted and anointed male leaders for executive leadership roles, but also focused on the strategies, if any, of each of these groups concerning efforts to affect change for inclusion of women, or

making space for women, in executive ministerial leadership within their context of leadership appointments and considerations.

From the second test group, fifteen of the total participants (60%) responded that as administrative bishops/overseers they are currently appointing specifically gifted women to leading administrative roles in their regions including, state/regional/national committees and boards, administrative leading roles on the state/regional/national team, state/regional/national executive ministry directors, state/regional/national core value based ministry initiatives, lead moderators for state/regional/national conferences, state/regional/national ministerial review boards, and one noted a woman as serving among the national trustees of the church in that nation and as a member of the national executive team. Six of the total participants (27%) responded that they are currently including specifically gifted and anointed women in comparable ministerial leadership roles such as district/regional/and state overseers under their authority as a presbyter. One participant noted that in his experience with this specific appointment; he has found the women as effective as the men who also serve in this role. Five (23%) of the participants included women among their lead pastors in their areas of supervision. Three of the five added that they live in areas of the world where women as lead pastors might be perceived as anticultural, and yet, these women are flourishing in the role. Nine of the participants (42%) specifically noted an intentional mentoring/training program in place to encourage women to desire such executive opportunities of leadership and to pursue education and credentialing as they continue to mature and serve. Two participants (9%) noted that they do not appoint women to apostolic roles. At least twelve of the participants (55%), while noting the challenges of gender discrimination, suggested that

they appoint leadership by recognizing calling, anointing, gifting, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit, irrespective of gender. However, several of those added that they are intentional to be equitable in appointing leadership.

From the third test group, all four participants supported encouraging women to prepare for and engage in all levels of leadership. One participant supposed my intention to perhaps result in a woman serving in the capacity of state/regional/national overseer. His support would align with an Assembly ruling that would give approval for such leadership. Another participant suggested that limitations to the office of bishop were not the only hindrance for women serving in executive ministerial leadership, observing that the need is great to actively seek more women in ministry all together, increasing visibility, opportunity, and recognition. One participant recorded their only strategy currently was a desire to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Recommendations

As noted earlier in this chapter, in light of the increasing challenges leading to the diminishing role and/or exclusion of women serving in executive ministerial leadership roles in the Church of God of Prophecy at the International Offices, the first recommendation at this point must include our fellowship developing an awareness of the limitations we may have inadvertently imposed that resulted in the direct reduction of women being considered for executive leadership.

Adding strength to the first recommendation, as a denomination we must make a concerted effort to search for solutions that will provide room for female inclusive executive leadership at the International Offices. While I agree with responses within the

project design noting concern for strategies that would mandate placement of women as a form of tokenism, “using gender-ratio as a measuring point, mandating an equity response rather than being aware of the Spirit-driven criteria Jesus used in selecting and empowering leadership among His ministry,” I also recognize the need to be intentional in developing strategies that will encourage women to pursue credentialing and to inspire women to desire and prepare themselves for executive leadership roles in the International Offices.

Concerning the noted awareness of the limitations that have been placed upon women serving in executive leadership roles within the Church of God of Prophecy, I recommend support concerning the response from one of our International Presbyters that more can be done to recognize the anointing of women who are capable to serve in executive leadership roles in state/regional/national jurisdictions. One recommendation would include appointing women to serve on state/regional/national boards and committees within their own geographical areas of oversight and responsibility. That would provide a strategy to reflect encouragement for women to rise from their regions to pursue initial credentialing and preparation for leadership within the global realm of ministry within the Church of God of Prophecy.

Concerning the opportunity for qualifying for higher educational opportunities toward the credentialing process, I would encourage our Executive Director for Leadership Development and Discipleship to lead his team to be more pro-active in encouraging women to initiate studies in post-graduate work and officially degreed programs, with specific design for the Accredited Ministries Development and the Center for Biblical Leadership. This very recommendation is the result of the incentive from Dr.

Hector Ortiz as he came to my office more than three years ago with encouragement for me to complete this doctoral program. His words motivated me to lead the way for anointed young women in our fellowship to recognize the need and create the desire to complete such a program in preparation for ministerial leadership roles in the future. I am grateful for his insistence that I be a part of this program with Gordon-Conwell. I can only hope that my participation has provided an encouragement for other women who currently serve in secondary roles of leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy to prepare themselves for future opportunities within this fellowship.

My final recommendation might encourage a more inclusive and reflective study by our Biblical Doctrine and Polity Assembly Committee concerning our accountability as a Christian church licensing fellowship in how we encourage inclusion and integration in executive ministerial leadership roles with specific examination of women with response to future consideration.

Conclusion

Over the past few weeks two significant events have evolved that are worth note and serve as an opportunity for reflection for the Church of God of Prophecy.

The first event is the unanimous election of Donna L. Barrett to serve as the 11th general secretary of The Assemblies of God Executive Presbytery. Previously, Barrett's ministry included service on the Executive Presbytery of the Ohio Ministry Network and on the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God. She has served in ministry for thirty years serving in roles as a youth pastor, associate pastor, church planter, district leader, and general presbyter. The Assemblies of God General Superintendent recognized

Barrett's "humility paired with a special gifting for leadership . . . 'I've seen God use her time and time again to speak wisdom into difficult circumstances at the district and national level . . . this fellowship will be blessed by her anointed leadership.'"⁴ Barrett will serve as the first woman on the Executive Leadership Team for the Assemblies of God. The General Superintendent also noted that while Barrett was not selected on the basis of her gender, they recognize that this historical moment will be "meaningful for many women who feel God's calling on their lives."⁵ While the Assemblies of God has ordained women in ministry from its founding in 1914, they acknowledge that many women served in foundational roles for the Movement. They currently recognize that 24 percent of Assemblies of God ministers are women.

From my perspective, I recognize that the leadership of the Pentecostal denomination of the Assemblies of God recognized God's anointing in leadership within Barrett's ministry and though this selection was historically unprecedented, the leadership of that Movement *made space* for her within her recognized and honored anointing and calling. Perhaps this event by a different Pentecostal organization is an important enough issue for us to take notice and follow precedent.

The other event occurred just prior to the conclusion of this thesis work is an article that was released from the ministry blog of Beth Moore, an American internationally recognized evangelist, author, and Bible teacher. Moore is the founder of *Living Proof Ministries*, noted as a Bible-based organization for women that is housed in Houston, Texas. The ministry is noted for its focus in aiding women who have a desire to model their lives upon evangelical Christian principles. In an open letter on her blog,

⁴ Forrester, Donna Barrett Elected General Secretary, ag.org/news.

⁵ Forrester, Donna Barrett Elected General Secretary, ag.org/news.

Moore confronted her brothers in Christ about evangelical misogyny suggesting that “many women have experienced horrific abuses within the power structures of our Christian world.”⁶ Moore’s letter is open about the abuse she has suffered and shares several personal and specific examples of how men have treated her—even well-known Christian theologians. In her letter, she asks first for an increased awareness of some of the attitudes many women encounter with the recognition that “women were among the followers of Christ (Luke 8), that the first recorded word out of His resurrected mouth was ‘woman’ (John 20:15) and that same woman was the first evangelist.”⁷ Secondly, she asks for,

“no tolerance for misogyny and dismissiveness toward women in your spheres of influence. I’m asking for your deliberate and clearly conveyed influence toward the imitation of Christ in His attitude and actions toward women. I’m also asking for forgiveness both from my sisters and my brothers. My acquiescence and silence made me complicit in perpetuating an atmosphere in which a damaging relational dynamic has flourished. I want to be a good sister to both genders.”⁸

I am encouraged by these two excellent examples, even with the consideration that they rise from Christian/Pentecostal movements other than my own.

One challenge that remains for women who serve in ministerial executive leadership within the Church of God of Prophecy is for current leadership to open opportunities and make room for women in these areas.

I must note one specific response from our current General Overseer and the General Presbyters who serve with him to the challenge of making space for anointed women to serve in executive ministerial leadership roles through the appointment of

⁶ Beth Moore, “A Letter to My Brothers,” *The LPM Blog*, accessed May 3, 2018, <https://blog.lproof.org/2018/05/a-letter-to-my-brothers.html>.

⁷ Moore, “A Letter to My Brothers,” *The LPM Blog*.

⁸ Moore, “A Letter to My Brothers,” *The LPM Blog*.

women to Assembly standing committees. These committees are appointed by the General Overseer and the nature and influence of their work is ongoing even when the Assemblies are not in session, functioning to provide the best possible ministry they can to serve the church body.⁹ Traditionally and historically, these committees have been predominately composed of male members from the International Presbytery and prominent emerging state/regional/national executive ministerial leaders according to their specific giftings and anointing. The assembly standing committees provide a report to the Assembly for their consideration and response and have a global scope or sphere of influence in this church. Among these committees, exploration and oversight includes:

- The Biblical Doctrine and Polity Committee which serves the Church by preparing an exposition for dialogue on universal matters of biblical doctrine, theology, ethics, and polity for Assembly consideration. This committee continually revisits the Word of God to assure that we are walking in the light of truth.¹⁰
- The Finance and Stewardship Committee is appointed to serve the church by formulating and articulating biblically based and globally oriented financial plans and stewardship principles for Assembly consideration.¹¹ Biblically based recommendations are accompanied by scriptural references and are included in reports presented at the Assembly to the constitutes by the committee.
- The Administrative Committee works directly under the authority of our General Overseer and serves to bring items of an administrative and practical nature

⁹ Editor, *Ministry Policy Manual*, (Cleveland, TN; White Wing Publishing House, 2016), 10.

¹⁰ Editor, *Ministry Policy Manual*, 12, 13.

¹¹ Editor, *Ministry Policy Manual*, 14

needing Assembly approval forward, reporting decisions taken between Assemblies, and clarifying existing working practices for the global church.

- The Global Outreach Committee is commissioned to serve national ministries through the leadership of the General Presbyters including mission fundraising and communication with the nations as priorities. Additionally, the committee works in partnership with finance in accounting for mission funds raised, coordination with funds delivery, and bringing the spirit of missions and nations to the tables at the International Offices and beyond.

Each of the four noted Assembly standing committees have at least one woman currently serving as appointed by the General Overseer in consultation with the General Presbyters. While this may not be stained-glass ceiling shattering, it is at least a beginning response toward forward movement.

A final observation connected to the encouragement of Beth Moore's open letter to Christian leadership is the need of empowering more women to express their voice in the same respect and to share their stories, struggles, and testimonies similarly in light of Moore's example of both positive and negative experiences. This was one of my goals in first composing such a study for the Church of God of Prophecy with relevance. The reality, however, is in order to have a discussion, we need both men and women examining the challenges and making known their expressions at the executive leadership tables.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire to Participants for the Women in Executive Leadership Survey

1. What were you taught during your spiritual formation concerning women fulfilling the role of executive ministerial leadership?
2. What are some of the obstacles you face(d) in fulfilling your role in executive ministerial leadership?
3. List three fears you have experienced in fulfilling your role in executive ministerial leadership.
4. Are there Scripture passages that restrain you in your pursuit of executive ministerial leadership? What Scripture references give you confidence to fulfill your executive ministerial leadership?
5. What roles, if any, have you been discouraged from considering in your positioning of executive ministerial leadership (please be specific)? What roles, if any, have you been encouraged to consider in your pursuit of executive ministerial leadership (please be specific)?
6. Are you called and gifted by God for executive ministerial leadership and have you had opportunities to use those giftings within the context of your current appointment? Briefly, how did that revelation come to you and how do you continue to move in that calling and gifting for executive ministerial leadership?
7. Have you had opportunities to use your leadership and ministry giftings within the context of your previous/current appointment?

8. Have there been any women role models you can identify in preparing you for executive ministerial leadership?
9. Are there other factors of which you are aware that limit(ed) women from serving in executive ministerial leadership including ethnicity, age, education, language, etc.?

Appendix B

Questionnaire to Participants for the International Presbyters' Survey

1. Are you aware of the presence or absence of women serving among executive ministerial leaders in your context of leadership?
2. What does the Bible say about women serving in executive ministerial leadership?
3. Do you believe women can be gifted to serve in executive ministerial leadership?
4. Do you believe God has empowered women to serve in executive ministerial leadership?
5. What are you doing in your context of leadership to include women in executive appointed ministerial leadership?

Appendix C

Questionnaire to Participants for the General Overseer/General Presbyters' Survey

1. What would you say is the ratio of women to men serving as executive ministerial leadership within the context of your administrative responsibility in the Church of God of Prophecy?
2. Do you believe that Scriptures are the reason women are prevented from serving in the capacity of executive ministerial leadership in the context of your administrative responsibility in the Church of God of Prophecy? If no, what do you think is the reasoning for a lower ratio of women to men?
3. Are you supportive of including a higher ratio of women in a more active role in executive ministerial leadership in the context of your administrative responsibility in the Church of God of Prophecy? If so, what strategies are you and your regional/national leaders putting in place to affect a change?

Appendix D

Initial Email to Possible Participants for the Women in Executive Leadership Survey

Greetings Sisters,

I am working on finishing my dissertation for my DMin and am attempting to complete the project design.

My mentor has asked me to write within my context here at IO with the subject The Challenge of Women in Executive Leadership Roles in The Church of God of Prophecy.

Each of you has served either under direct appointment in these offices or on one of the standing Assembly Committees.

There are three different groups who will be asked to contribute toward the investment of this directive, including this group, a select group of International Presbyters, and finally the currently serving General Presbyters.

There are 12 of you in this group and you will have the largest influence into the perspective of your experience of serving under appointment at this level for COGOP.

There are 9 questions, some with a follow-up question. They are not difficult nor involved. I answered the questions in about 30 minutes so I would not want any of you to feel overwhelmed with my expectations. There is some diversity among us and I am looking for transparency in your experience, as well as constructive ways forward to encourage inclusion for women at this level of leadership. Is it even possible?

The survey will come on the form of Survey Monkey and insure confidentiality. I will need this information back in about 15 days. That may seem like a short time, but I would be so grateful for your involvement.

Thank you for your time to respond to this message with your direct contact information so the survey can be sent to you.

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Appendix E

Initial Email to Possible Participants for the International Presbyters' Survey

Brethren,

I am working on my dissertation for my Doctor of Ministry degree in Global Pentecostalism at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and am attempting to complete the project design.

My mentor has asked me to write within my context of ministry here at International Offices with the subject concerning The Challenge of Women in Executive Leadership Roles (ministry directors) in The Church of God of Prophecy.

There are three different groups who will be asked to contribute toward the investment of this directive including this group for which I am writing to you – a select group of International Presbyters; a group of women who have served under appointment either at the International Offices or on a Standing Assembly Committee; and finally, the General Presbyters who are currently serving.

There are 44 of you in this particular group. You are a diverse group including men from Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and North America. I have Bcc'd each of you and your influence will be directed into the perspective of your experience of serving under appointment at this level for COGOP in connection with women who serve in executive ministry positions from the International Offices.

There are 5 questions. They are not difficult nor involved. I answered the questions in less than 30 minutes so I would not want you to feel overwhelmed with my expectations.

There is some diversity among the women who have served in these capacities. For your response, I am looking for transparency in your experience, your understanding of biblical perspective with respect to women serving in these kinds of leadership areas, as well as constructive ways forward to encourage inclusion for women at this level of leadership if it is even possible. If you do not agree with the inclusion of women in executive appointments for COGOP, I am also interested in your perspective and transparent response. Your response would not be what you think I want to hear, nor an evaluation of my personal performance, rather the survey includes women in general serving in possible executive leadership roles within COGOP from the past, the present, and the possible future under appointment.

Please forgive this very informal introduction. I may not have current emails on each of you, and yet it is easier to begin in this way to determine your willingness to participate.

The survey will come through the form of Survey Monkey to insure confidentiality. The timing for the response is very limited as I will need this information back in about 15 Days. I know this seems a short notice and short turn-around time, but I would be so grateful for your involvement. I value each of you and your input.

I also realize I am imposing on your time, and I know all of us are pressed with responsibilities. Thank you for your time to respond to this message and confirm your current email address and your willingness/ability to participate. When I hear back from you, we will send the survey to you.

****If you cannot participate at this time for any reason, I absolutely understand. Could you please send a quick response with that information as well? If I do not hear from you by Saturday – 48 hours – I will assume you are not available. However, it would be helpful if you could respond.**

Thank you also for your consideration. I value each of your investments in my life and encouragements in the ministries in which I have been involved through the past years of service in my experience at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy.

Blessings,
Cathy

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Appendix F

Brethren,

I am working on my dissertation for my Doctor of Ministry degree in Global Pentecostalism at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and am attempting to complete the project design.

My mentor has asked me to write within my context of ministry here at International Offices with the subject concerning The Challenge of Women in Executive Leadership Roles (ministry directors) in The Church of God of Prophecy.

There are three different groups who will be asked to contribute toward the investment of this directive including a select diverse group of 44 International Presbyters including men from Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and North America; a group of 12 women who have served under appointment either at the International Offices or on a Standing Assembly Committee; and finally the General Overseer/General Presbyters who are currently serving. This is of course where you come in. I have spoken to most of you over the past couple of months for this effort.

Your part of the survey includes your perspective/experience of serving in your current role at this level for COGOP in connection with women who serve in executive ministry positions from the International Offices.

There are 3 short sets of questions. They are not difficult nor involved. I believe this will take you less than 30 minutes, so I would not want you to feel overwhelmed with my expectations. There is some diversity among the women who have served in these capacities. For your response, I am looking for transparency in your perspective, experience, your understanding of biblical precepts with respect to women serving in these kinds of leadership areas, as well as constructive ways forward to encourage inclusion for women at this level of leadership if it is even possible. If you do not agree with the inclusion of women in executive appointments for COGOP, I am also interested in that perspective and transparent response. Your response would not be what you think I want to hear, nor an evaluation of my personal performance, rather the survey includes women in general serving in possible executive leadership roles within COGOP from the past, the present, and the possible future under appointment.

Please forgive this very informal introduction. It is easier to begin in this way to determine your willingness to participate and alert you to the timing.

The survey will come through the form of Survey Monkey to insure confidentiality. The timing for the response is very limited as I will need this information back in about 15 days. I realize this is short notice and short turn-around time, but I would be so grateful for your involvement. I value each of you and your input.

I realize I am imposing on your time. And I know all of us are pressed with responsibilities. Thank you for your time to respond to this message and confirm your current email address and your willingness/ability to participate. When I hear back from you, we will send the survey to you.

****If you cannot participate at this time for any reason, I absolutely understand. Could you please send a quick response with that information as well? If I do not hear from you by Saturday – 48 hours – I will assume you are not available. However, it would be helpful if you could respond.**

Thank you also for your consideration. I value each of your investments in my life and encouragements in the ministries in which I have been involved through the past years of service in my experience at the International Offices of the Church of God of Prophecy.

Blessings,
Cathy

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Appendix G

Letter of Invitation to Participants for the Women in Executive Leadership Survey

I am working on finishing my DMin dissertation and am attempting to complete the project design. There are 9 questions. They are not difficult, not involved. I answered the questions in about 30 minutes so I would not want you to feel overwhelmed in my expectations. I am looking for transparency in your experience as well as constructive ways forward to encourage inclusion for women at this level of leadership. Please return before January 20, 2018. Thank you for your participation. Cathy

Appendix H

Letter of Invitation to Participants for the International Presbyters' Survey

I am working on finishing my dissertation on the Doctor of Ministry degree in Global Pentecostalism at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and am attempting to complete the project design. This includes a survey of input related to the subject matter. You are a diverse group, including men from Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and North America. I am asking each of you for your input and experience of serving under appointment in the COGOP in connection with women who serve in executive ministry positions from the International Offices and in executive leadership in your areas of supervision. There are 5 questions. They are not difficult nor time consuming. I am interested in transparent response. The survey does not require an evaluation of my personal work here, but includes women in general serving in possible executive leadership roles within COGOP from the past, the present, and the possible future under appointment. Thank you, Cathy

Appendix I

Letter of Invitation to Participants for the General Overseer/General Presbyters' Survey

I am working on finishing my dissertation on the Doctor of Ministry degree in Global Pentecostalism at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and am attempting to complete the project design. This includes a survey of input related to the subject matter. You are a diverse group, including men from Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Latin America, Europe, and North America. I am asking each for your input and experience of serving at this level for COGOP in connection with women who serve in executive ministry positions from the International Offices. There are 3 short sets of questions. They are not difficult nor time consuming. I am interested in transparent response. The survey does not require an evaluation of my personal work here, but includes women in general serving in possible executive leadership roles within COGOP from the past, the present, and the possible future under appointment. Thank you, Cathy

Appendix J

Reminder of Invitation to Participants for the Women in Executive Leadership Survey

Greetings Sisters,

Tomorrow I will need to close the survey concerning my dissertation so I can complete the chapter by the end of next week for submission. I wrote and invited each of you to complete the process as I am truly interested in including your perspective. Most of you responded that you would participate. I believe Jerlena Riley told me that it took less than 15 minutes to complete. I would be most grateful for as much of your participation as possible.

If you need the link again, hit respond to this email and I will try to send it to you once more. Hopefully you all have the original invitation.

Blessings,

Cathy

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Appendix K

Reminder of Invitation to Participants for the International Presbyters' Survey

Greetings Brothers,

We recently contacted you about a survey, but haven't received your responses. We'd really appreciate your participation.

Due to illness in our home, I had to take a break from completing my dissertation. However, I am attempting to complete the process by the end of April and believe you have significant input that would add to my work. The average time spent on the survey by those who responded was less than 20 minutes. I would be most grateful for your time. I do need these responses by Monday, April 2nd.

The only qualifier I should have included in the first contact was the definition of Executive Leadership. I am not necessarily speaking concerning the office of Bishop, rather the appointed executive leadership that has in the past (before restructuring) included women as appointed executive ministry leaders at the International Offices.

Click the button below to start or continue the survey. Again, thank you for your time. And, again, for those who are unable to respond, I completely understand.

Blessings,

Cathy

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Appendix L

Request to a Participant for the International Presbyters' Survey whose Response was not Recorded by Survey Monkey

Brother,

As you have most probably seen, we have been through several weeks of illness in our home and I had to put my dissertation work aside for a while. I am trying to complete it again and finish well. I received this email saying you had completed the process, but I never received your survey. I am sending one reminder to those who I felt had something significant to add to my work. You are one of those. You are the only one I am writing to separately as I received this email saying you had completed the process.

If possible, I would be most thankful for you to hit it again so I can include your information. The (nation) is one of our most fruitful fields of excellence of women in ministry/leadership. I am always amazed by the quality of ministry I see in operation reflected in all gender, age, ethnicity, etc., but since my work has been delegated toward women, I especially want to recognize the effort in the (nation).

If this request comes at a difficult time, I understand completely. However, if you are able, I would be grateful to include your input.

Blessings,

Cathy

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Appendix M

Reminder of Invitation to Participants for the General Overseer/General Presbyters' Survey

Greetings Brothers,

We recently contacted you about a survey, but haven't received your responses.

Due to illness in our home, I had to put this work on hold for a few weeks. Now I am completing the process and would really appreciate your participation. I believe you have significant input and I would be most grateful for your response. Of the four who did respond, their investment of time was less than 10 minutes. If possible, I need your response by Monday, April 2nd.

Click the button below to start the survey. Thank you for your time.

Blessings,

Cathy

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Appendix N

Request to a Participant for the General Overseer/General Presbyters' Survey whose Response was not Recorded by Survey Monkey

Bishop,

Thank you for your quick response to the invitation again.

I received your email immediately when I sent the initial survey that you had completed it. However, it never came through on the Survey Monkey. We tried some back doors to see if we could retrieve it another way, however, we were never able to add your comments to the four who responded and theirs came through.

If it is possible and you have time, can you try again? I so want to include the positive things I see you doing in the (region) to this project. However, I also understand if this comes at a difficult time to respond again. I'm not sure why the survey did not come through.

If this request comes at a bad time, I absolutely understand.

Blessings.

Cathy

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VITA

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